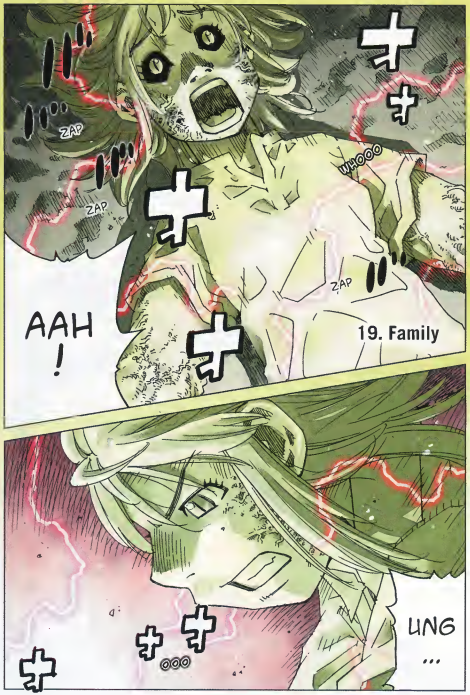
Scanne by KickTheKitty and cleaned by... someone else. ^^

V

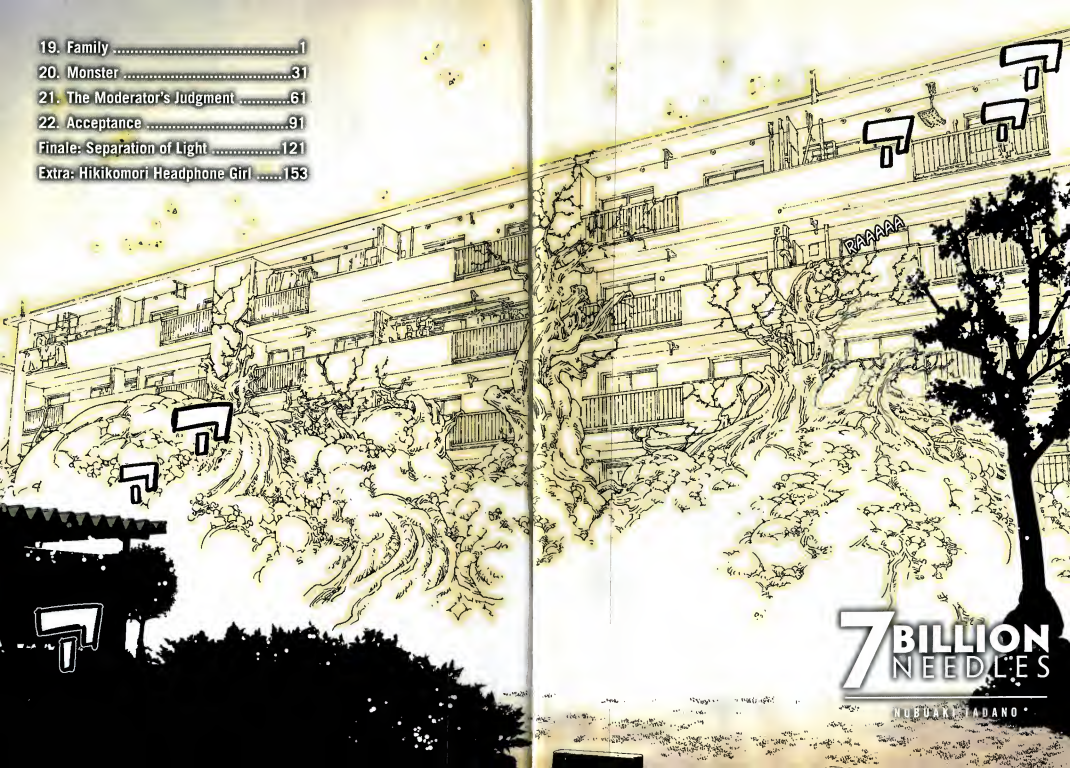
7 Billion Needles

Nobuaki Tadano

Volume 4


ZAP
ZAP
ZAP
UHOOO
AAH
!
19. Family
UNG
...
OOO

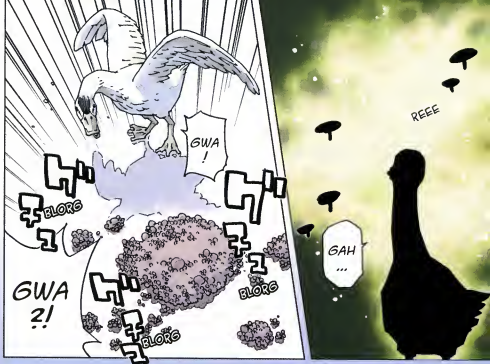
19. Family 1
20. Monster 31
21. The Moderator's Judgment 61
22. Acceptance 91
Finale: Separation of Light 121
Extra: Hikikomori Headphone Girl 153

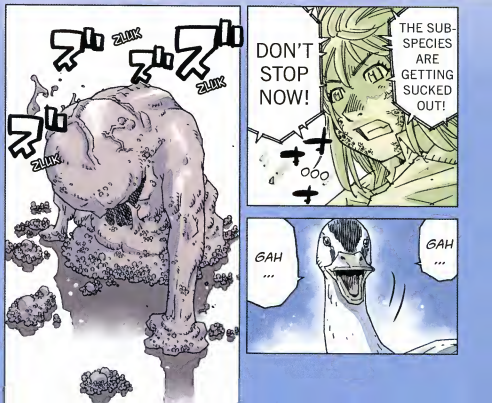


7 BILLION NEEDLES

NOBUAKI TADANO

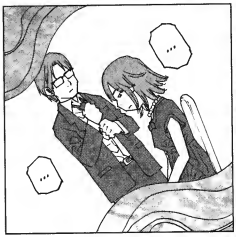
ZLIIK
ZLIIK
ZZZAP
!!


GWA
!
BLORG
BLORG
BLORG
GWA
?!
REEE
GAH
...

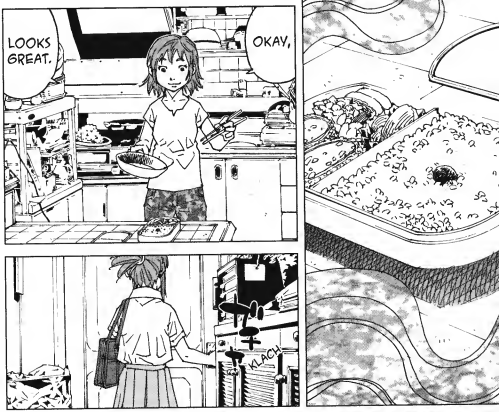

ZLIIK
ZLIIK
ZLIIK
DON'T STOP NOW!
THE SUB-SPECIES ARE GETTING SUCKED OUT!
GAH
...
GAH
...

POOR HI-KARU.
LOSING BOTH PARENTS AT SUCH AN AGE MUST BE QUITE A SHOCK.
IF WE DON'T LEAVE SOON WE'LL BE LATE FOR THE WAKE.
MAKI.
THIS ...
IS FROM BEFORE I ARRIVED?
SHE'S MOVING HERE TOMORROW. WE'VE GOT TO BE CHEERFUL FOR HER.
...
YOU'RE RIGHT.

!!


...
...

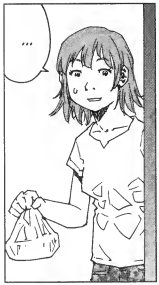
THEY'RE FRAGMENTS OF MAKI'S MEMORIES STUCK TO THE SUBSPECIES.

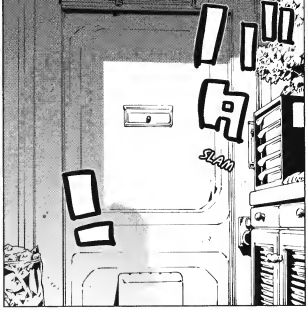

LOOKS GREAT.
OKAY,
...

SLAM

TAKE IT WITH—

AH, HIKARU!
WAIT! I MADE YOU LUNCH!


...

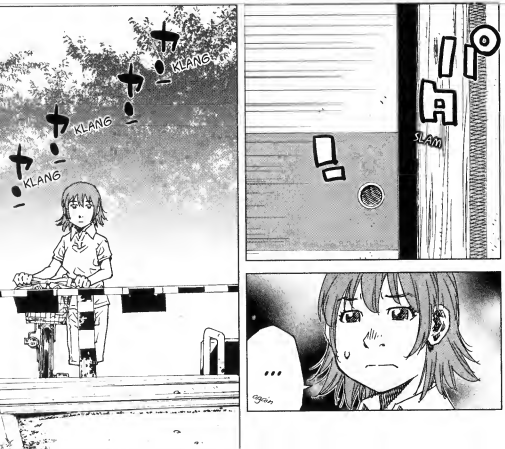

SLAM

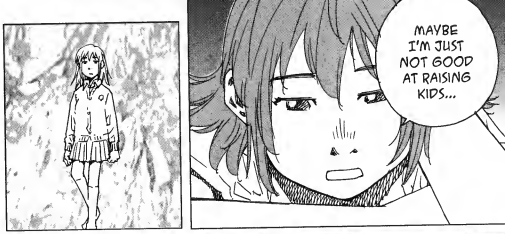
GIVE HER SOME TIME, SHE'LL COME AROUND.
I... HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.

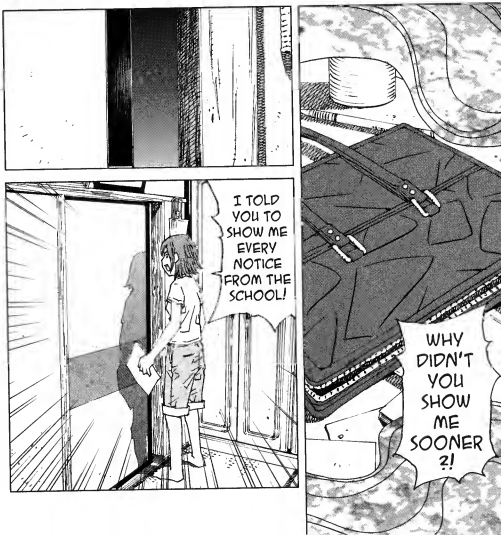
WHAT'S WRONG?
SIGH

WON'T OPEN UP TO ME.
HIKARU

I WAS JUST CLEAN-ING UP...
DON'T EVER DO THAT.
HUH?
SO YOU WENT IN MY ROOM?


KLANG
KLANG
KLANG
SLAM
...
again.


MAYBE I'M JUST NOT GOOD AT RAISING KIDS...


I TOLD YOU TO SHOW ME EVERY NOTICE FROM THE SCHOOL!
WHY DIDN'T YOU SHOW ME SOONER?!

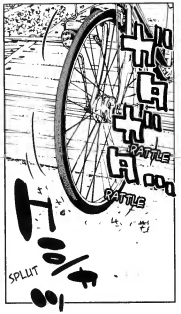
KA-KLAK

KLANG
KLANG
KLANG

THE EGGS ...
DAMN IT!!

KLAK
KLAK

AH

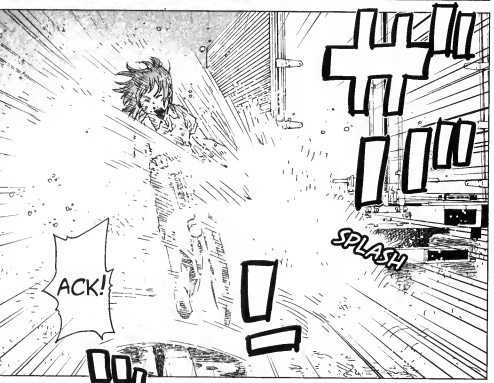

RATTLE
RATTLE
SPLIT

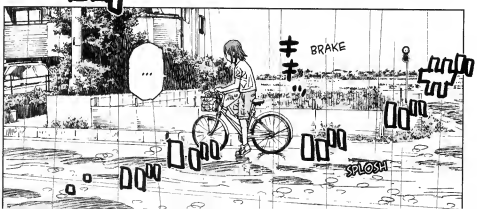
LEAVE ME ALONE.

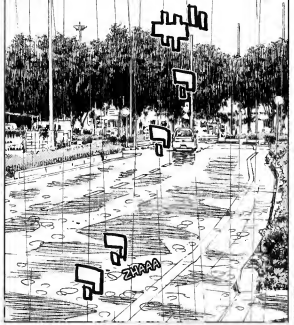
WHAT CAN I DO?

KTUN
KTUN
KTUN
PLEASE WAIT

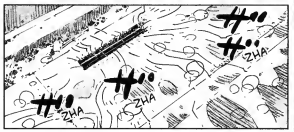
SPLISH
SZZHHHAAA


ACK!
SPLASH

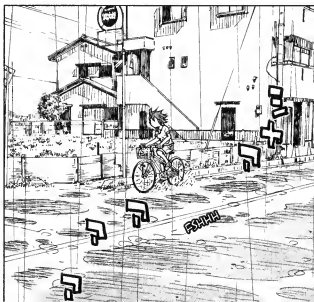

...
BRAKE
SPLOSH

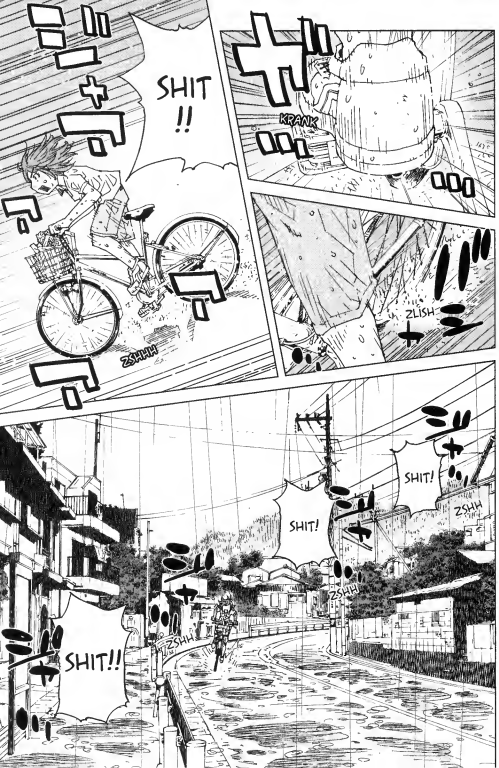

ZHAAA

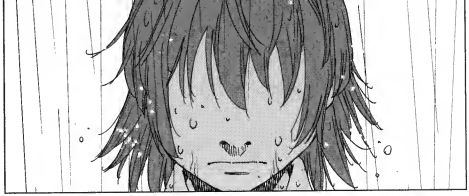
RURR
RURRR

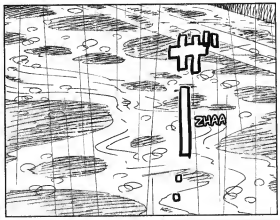

ZHA
ZHA
ZHA

WHAT THE HECK?!
ZHAAA


FSHHH!



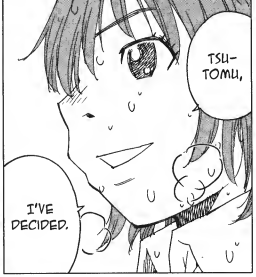




LEAVE ME ALONE.

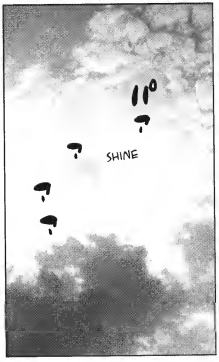
SHIIIIT
!!
ZSHHH

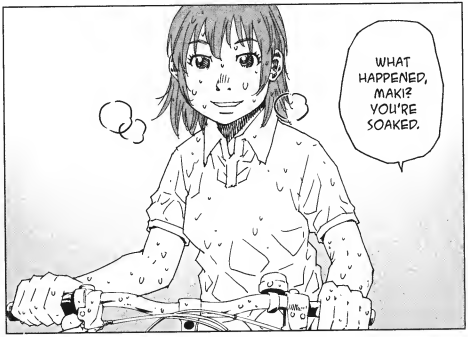
W-WHAT?


TSU-TOMU,
I'VE DECIDED.

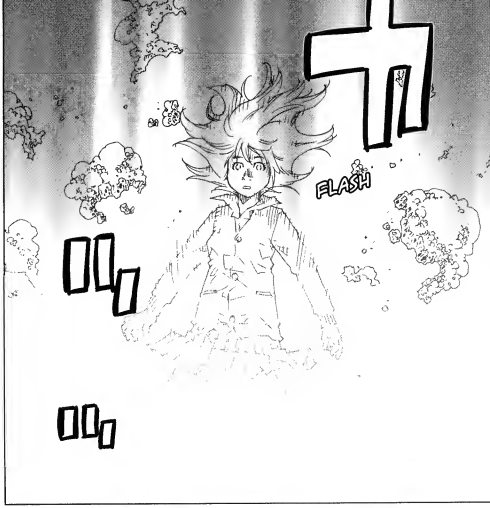
NO MATTER WHAT,
I'LL MAKE HIKARU A PART OF OUR FAMILY.

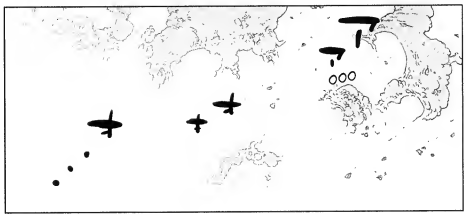
...


SHINE


WHAT HAPPENED, MAKI? YOU'RE SOAKED.

ゴゴゴゴゴゴゴゴ
ゴゴ
ゴゴ
WOOSH
ooo

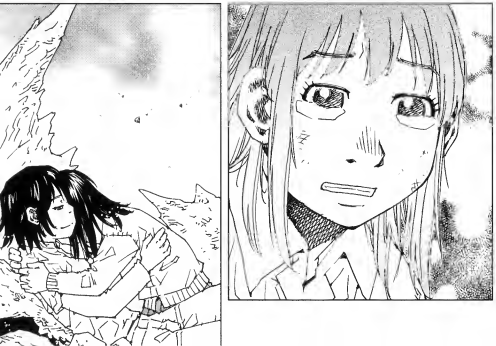

FLASH


ooo

HIKARU ...
AUNTIE!
IT'S OKAY NOW...
I'M SORRY, HIKARU.
I...
WORRIED, WHEN YOU FIRST CAME TO LIVE WITH US.
I DID... SOMETHING AWFUL ...

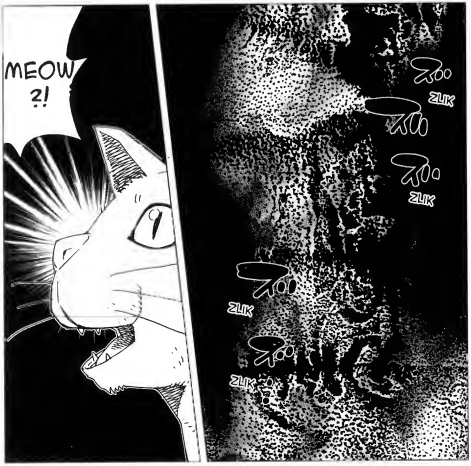
NN...
ゴゴ
ROOOAAR
ゴゴゴ
WOW ...
YOU REALLY BROUGHT HER BACK?

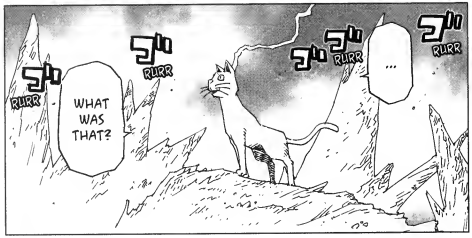
IT MADE ME WANT TO TRY EVEN HARDER
TO MAKE YOU CALL OUR APARTMENT "HOME." TO MAKE SURE YOU WEREN'T ALONE.

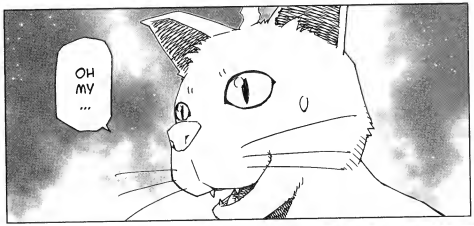


...

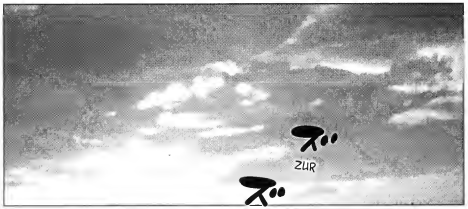
YOU WERE ALWAYS ALONE.
TSUTOMU AND I TRIED TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO HELP YOU.
OW OW
AND WHEN NOTHING GOT YOU TO RESPOND

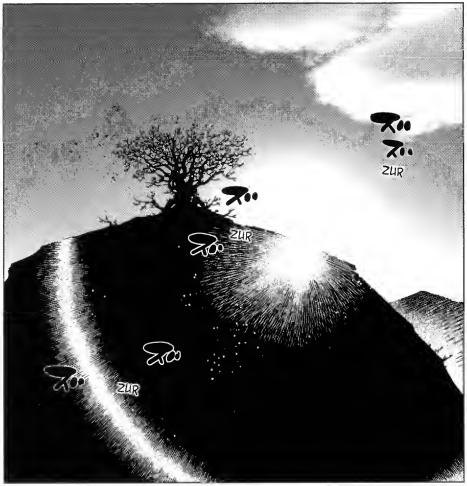

MEOW
?!
ZLIK
ZLIK
ZLIK
ZLIK


ゴゴ
RURR
WHAT WAS THAT?
ゴゴ
RURR
ゴゴ
RURR
...
ゴゴ
RURR

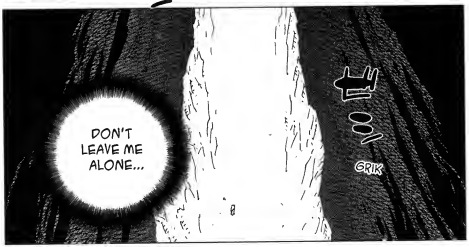

OH MY ...

WHAT ARE THEY, THAT CAN REVERSE IRREVERSIBLE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESSES ?

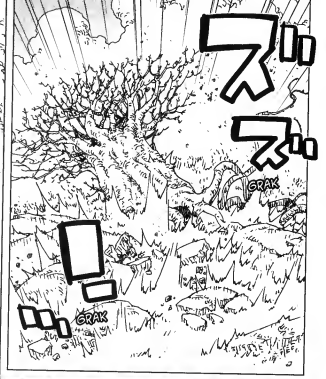

ZUR
ZUR

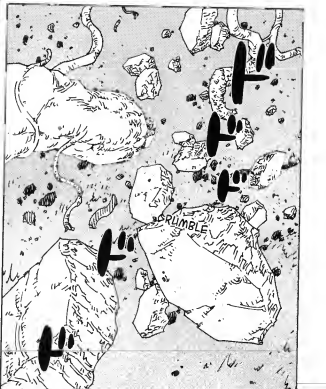

ZUR
ZUR
ZUR
ZUR

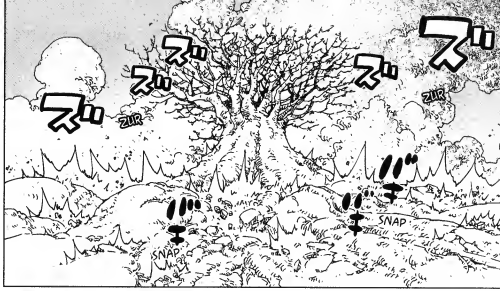
GRIK
GRIK
GRIK
GRIK

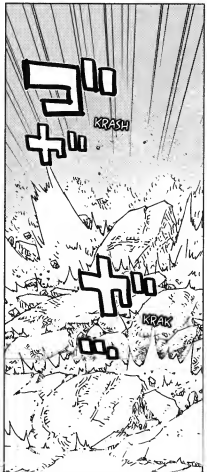

DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE...
GRIK

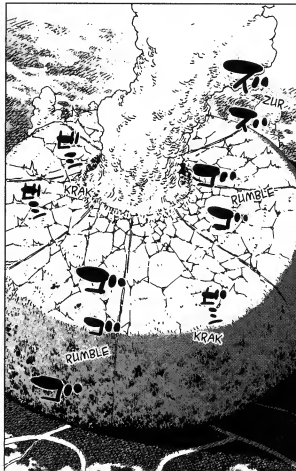
BOOM


GRAK
GRAK

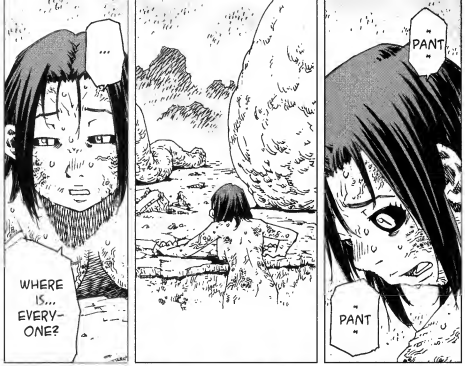

RUMBLE

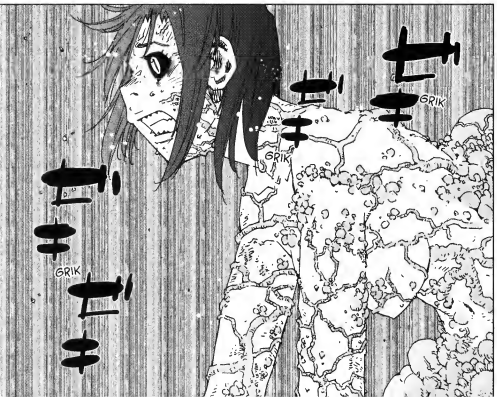

ZUR
SNAP
SNAP

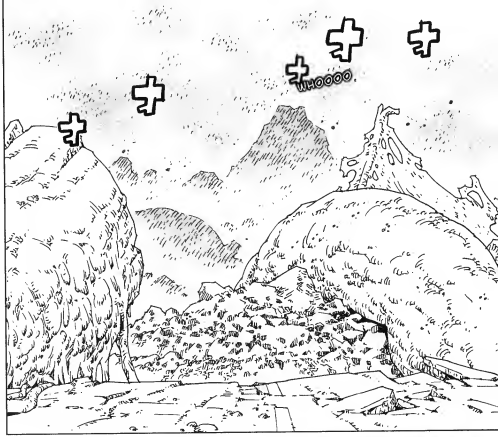

KRASH
KRAK

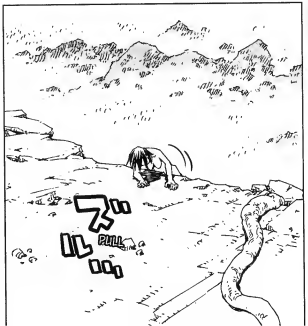

ZUR
KRAK
RUMBLE
KRAK
RUMBLE

ド
RRRRRR


...
WHERE IS... EVERY-ONE?
PANT
PANT


GRIK
GRIK
GRIK

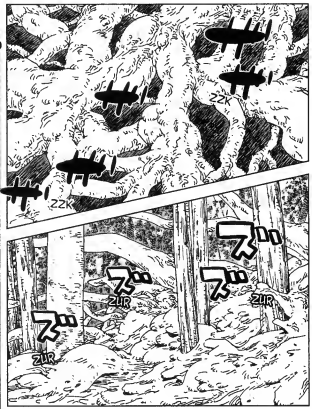

WHOOOO

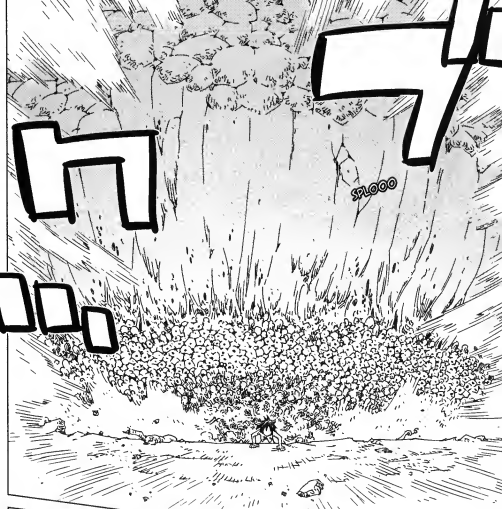

ZUUU

KLAK

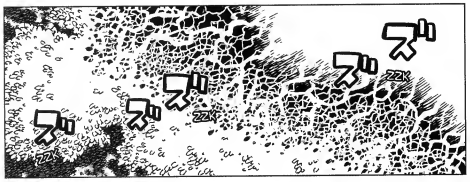
BLORT

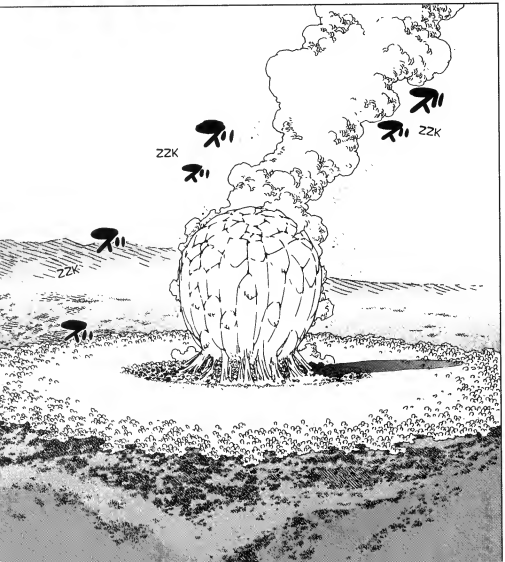
ZUR
ZUR
!
JUMP


ZZK
ZZK
ZUR
ZUR
ZUR


SPLOOO

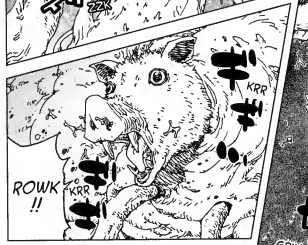
I DON'T WANNA BE ALONE.

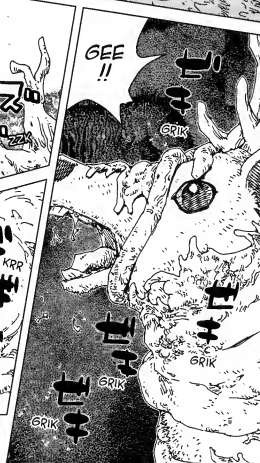

ZZK
ZZK
ZZK
ZZK


ZZK
ZZK
ZZK
ZZK

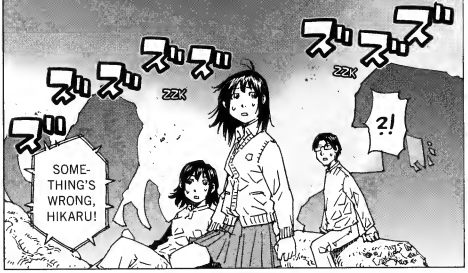
?!

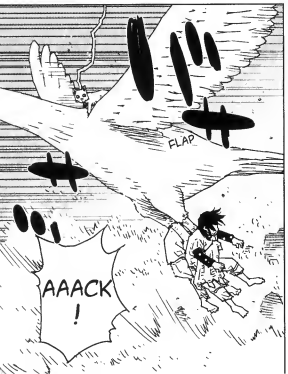
PEEP!
PEEP...
ZZK
ZZK


KRR
KRR
ROWK!!


GEE!!
GRIK
GRIK
GRIK

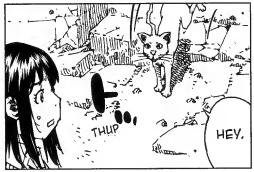
FLAP
EEK!

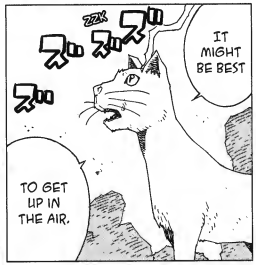

ZZK
ZZK
ZZK
?!
SOME-
THING'S
WRONG,
HIKARU!


FLAP
AAACK
!

HI-HI-
HIKARU
...
HIKARU'S
TURNED
INTO
SOME
WEIRD
BIRD...

HIKARU,
LET ME
CONTROL
THE BODY
!!
WH-
WHY
?!
HURRY
!!

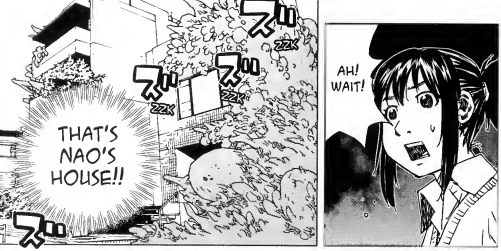

THUP
HEY.


ZZK
IT
MIGHT
BE BEST
TO GET
UP IN
THE AIR.

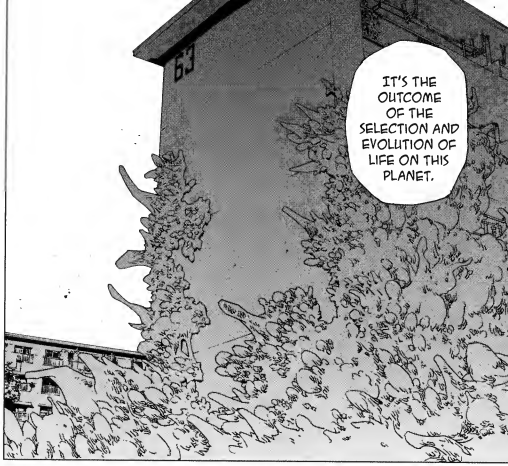
COULD IT BE ...
EEE !
THERE'S NO DOUBT.
GIVEN ITS PATH,
THE DOME HAS OPENED.
YES.

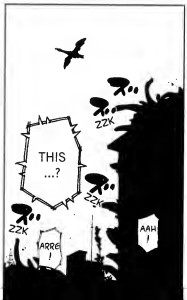
!!
YWASH

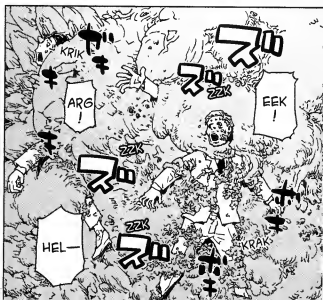
WHAT...
WHAT IS THAT?!


THAT'S NAO'S HOUSE!!
AH! WAIT!

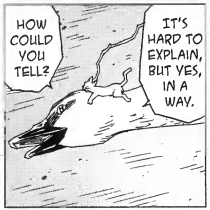
D-DO-DON'T ...
LEAVE ME ALONE !!
HURRY UP, YOU TWO!
AAAH !!
ZLUK
MOM !!
ACK!

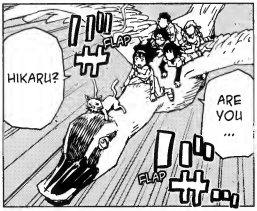

IT'S THE OUTCOME OF THE SELECTION AND EVOLUTION OF LIFE ON THIS PLANET.


THIS ...?
AAH !
ARRE !


KRIK
ARG !
EEK !
HEL—
KRAK

FLAP
FLAP
FLAP


HOW COULD YOU TELL?
IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN, BUT YES, IN A WAY.


FLAP
HIKARU?
ARE YOU ...
FLAP

I WONDER IF YOUR OTHER FRIEND, SAYA, IS OKAY.

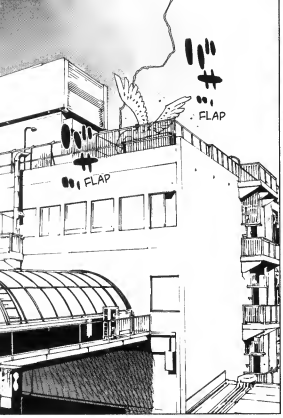
WEIRD-EST?

YOU KNOW MY NAME.
AND HIKARU'S MY WEIRDEST FRIEND...

GONK
!!

GET ON !!
FLAP
WHAT ...
HURRY, NAO!!

MOM !!
SLUMP


FLAP
FLAP

NO...

GUOSH!

SA...

IT'S TOO LATE, HIKARU.
LET ME DOWN!

SAYA'S HOUSE ...

ゲニ
PINCH!
OW!!

...?!

I CAN'T DO ANY-THING TO HELP.
SORRY, BUT...

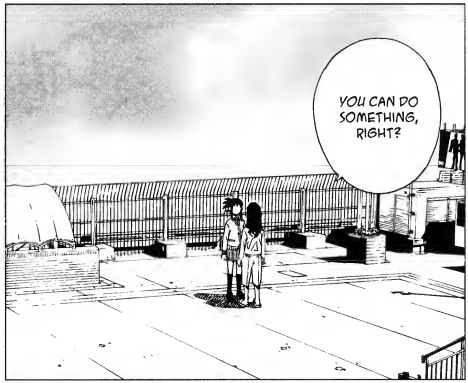
BUT
SNAP

NAO
...

HIKARU
?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
SIT DOWN...

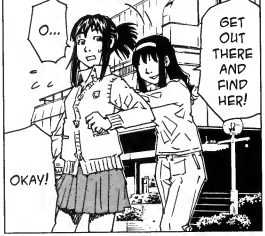
HIKARU.

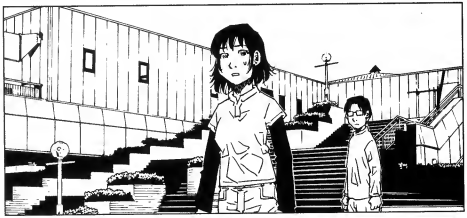
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
SAYA'S...
SAYA...

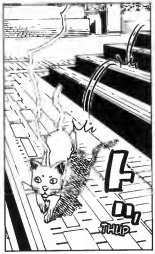

YOU CAN DO SOMETHING, RIGHT?

I'M SURE SAYA'S OUT THERE STUBBORNLY HOLDING ON.
BUT SHE CAN BE PRETTY HOPELESS ON HER OWN.

HIKARU !!


O...
GET OUT THERE AND FIND HER!
OKAY!

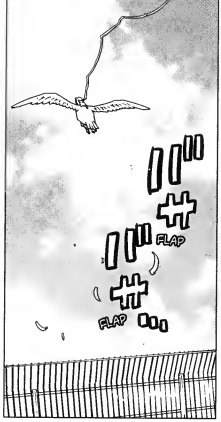


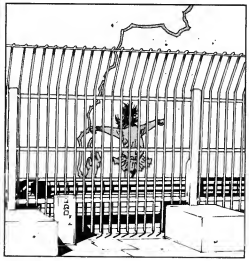

THUD

SORRY, AUNTIE.
I GOTTA GO.

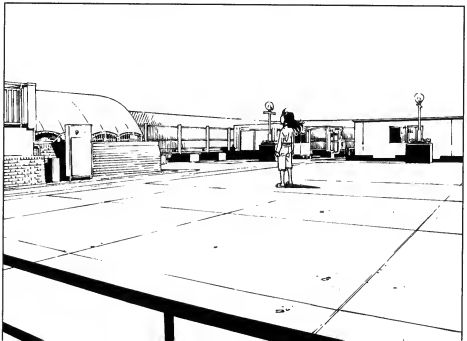
SORRY, HIKARU.

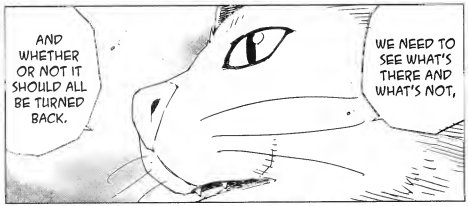
BUT PLEASE...
SAVE SAYA. SAVE US ALL.

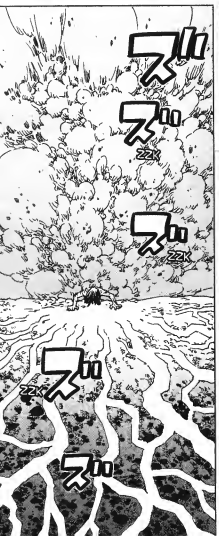

FLAP
FLAP

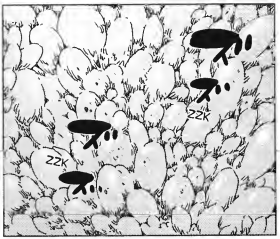


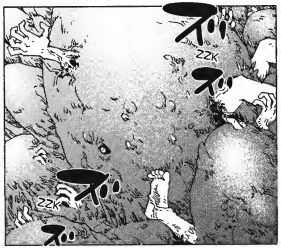
HIKA—




AND WHETHER OR NOT IT SHOULD ALL BE TURNED BACK.
WE NEED TO SEE WHAT'S THERE AND WHAT'S NOT,

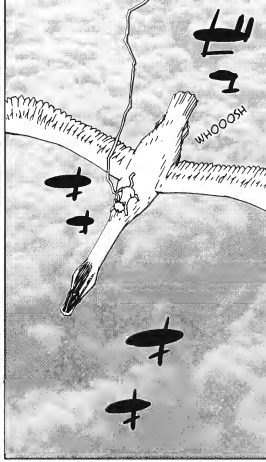

ズ
ズ
ZZK
ズ
ZZK
ズ
ZZK
ズ
ズ


ズ
ZZK
ズ
ZZK
ズ

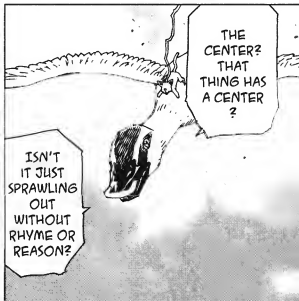

ズ
ZZK
ズ
ZZK
ズ

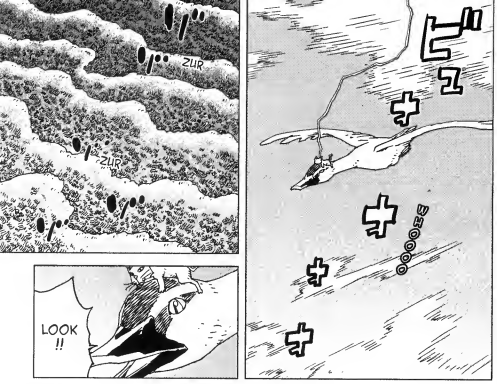
WANNA TEAR THROUGH THAT MONSTER MASS?
SO, WHAT NOW?
NO!! SAYA AND CHIKA MIGHT BE IN THERE!

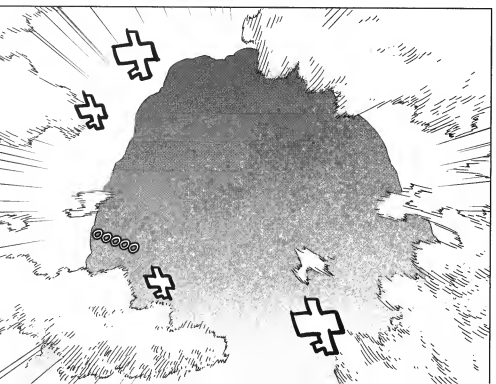
HEAD TO THE DOME.
THE CENTER OF IT...


WHOOSH

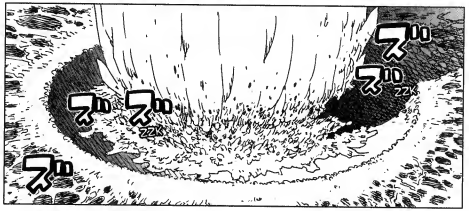
ズ
ZZK
ズ
I DON'T KNOW.
ズ
ZZK
ズ

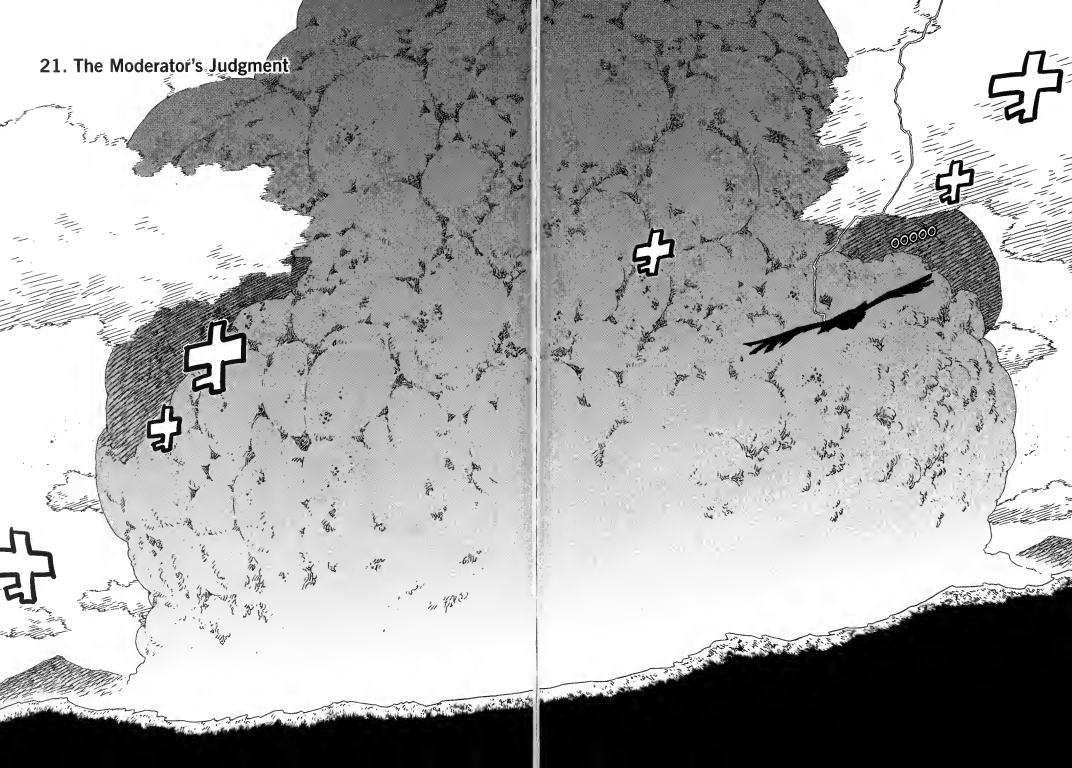

THE CENTER? THAT THING HAS A CENTER ?
ISN'T IT JUST SPRAWLING OUT WITHOUT RHYME OR REASON?


ZUR
ZUR
LOOK !!

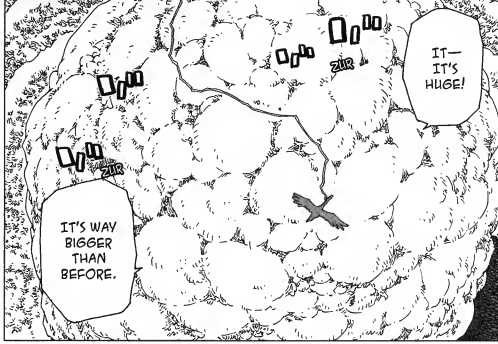


WHERE IS... EVERY-ONE?
EW
MORE, MORE ...
YOU ANNOY ME
BE ONE WITH ME. ALONE ...

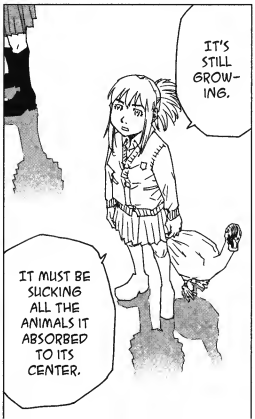


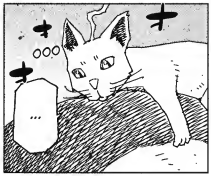


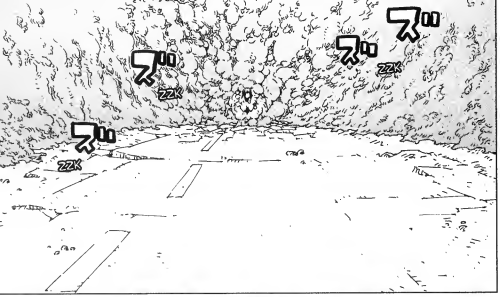
AH!!
LEAP
FLASH


IT— IT'S HUGE!
ZUR
ZUR
IT'S WAY BIGGER THAN BEFORE.

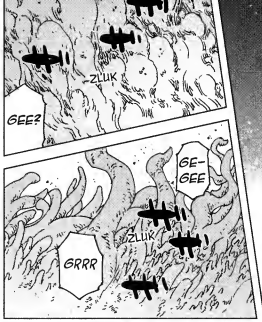
SAYA AND CHIKA ...


IT'S STILL GROW-ING.
IT MUST BE SUCKING ALL THE ANIMALS IT ABSORBED TO ITS CENTER.


...

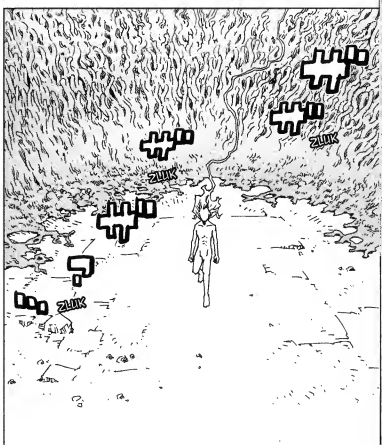

ZZZ
ZZZ
ZZZ
ZZZ
ZZZ

CHIKA
?!


ZLUK
GEE?
GE-
GEE
ZLUK
GRRR

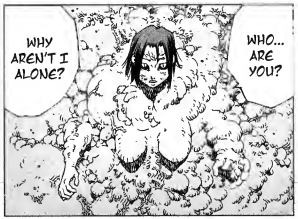
OOOOO

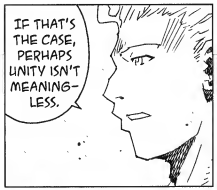
THAT'S
...

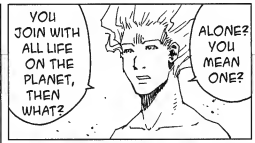

ZUUK
ZUUK
ZUUK
ZUUK

YOU JOIN WITH EVERYTHING— WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DIE?
LET ME ASK THIS, THEN.
ドゴズ
SPLOOO
!
!

ARE YOU THE CENTER OF ALL THESE SUB-SPECIES?

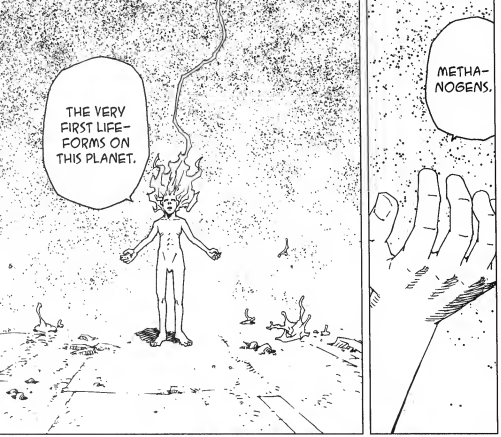

WHY AREN'T I ALONE?
WHO... ARE YOU?

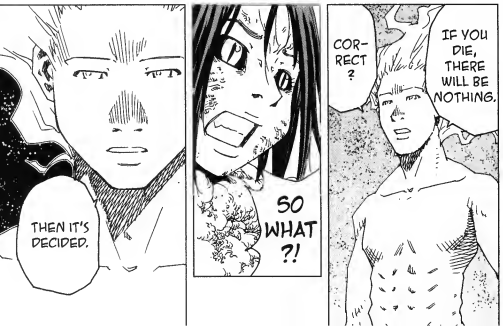

IF THAT'S THE CASE, PERHAPS UNITY ISN'T MEANING-LESS.


YOU JOIN WITH ALL LIFE ON THE PLANET, THEN WHAT?
ALONE? YOU MEAN ONE?

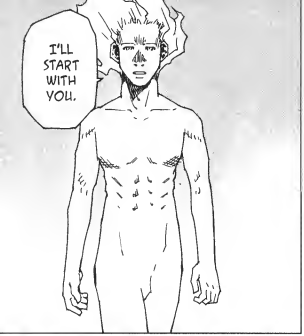
...
YOU TALK TOO MUCH.
GLARE

IF I'M ONE WITH EVERYBODY, THEN NOBODY...
NOBODY WILL BE LONELY OR HURT ...


METHA-
NOGENS.
THE VERY FIRST LIFE-FORMS ON THIS PLANET.

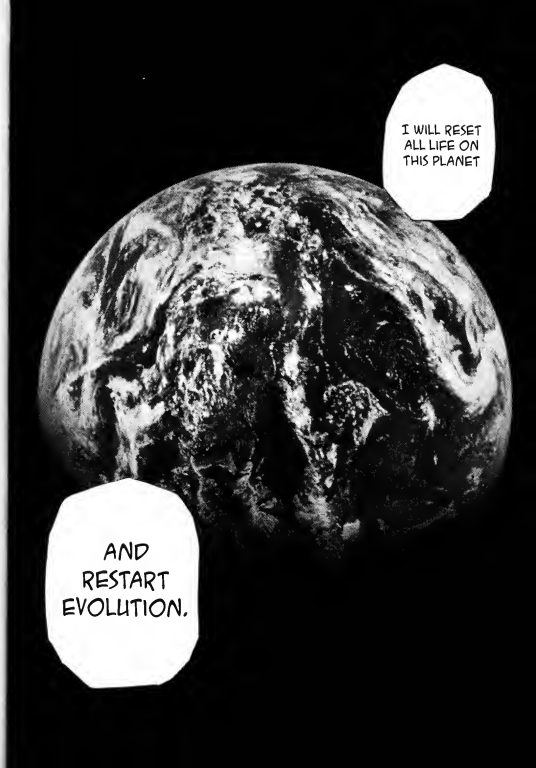

IF YOU DIE, THERE WILL BE NOTHING.
COR-RECT ?
SO WHAT ?!
THEN IT'S DECIDED.

...!!
?!
BOOOM
!

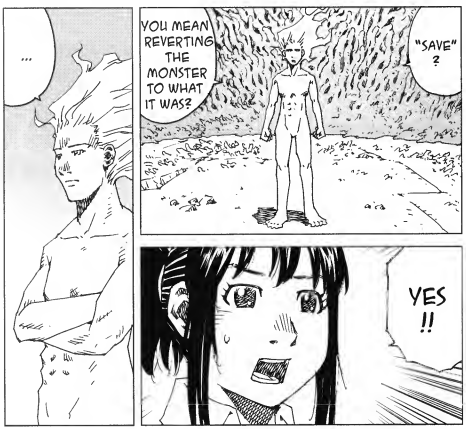

I'LL START WITH YOU.

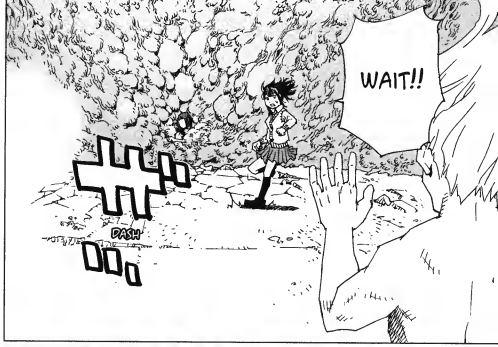
UH...
UH! DON'T COME NEAR ME...

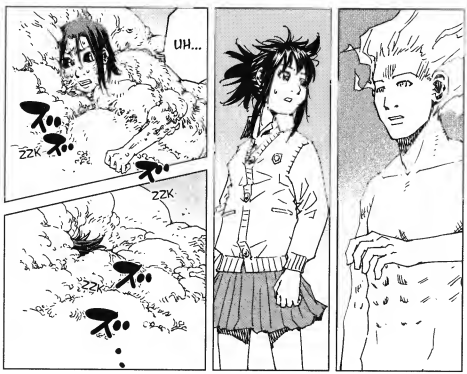
GET...
GET AWAY !!

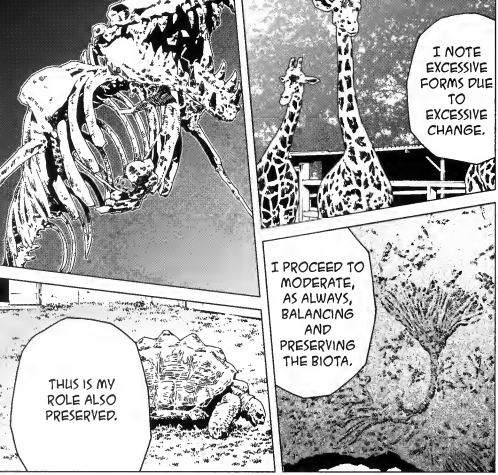

I WILL RESET ALL LIFE ON THIS PLANET
AND RESTART EVOLUTION.

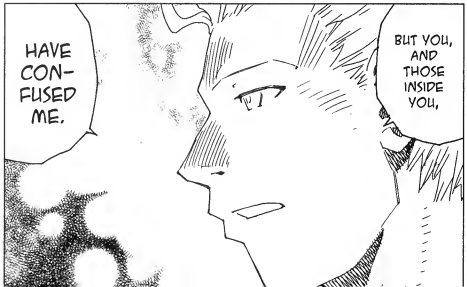
AND EVERYONE ELSE. SO PLEASE WAIT!
I'LL SAVE CHIKA


...
YOU MEAN REVERTING THE MONSTER TO WHAT IT WAS?
"SAVE"?
YES!!


WAIT!!
PASH

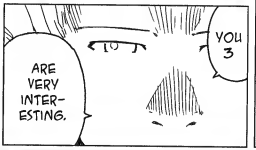

UH...
ZZK
ZZK
ZZK


I NOTE EXCESSIVE FORMS DUE TO EXCESSIVE CHANGE.
I PROCEED TO MODERATE, AS ALWAYS, BALANCING AND PRESERVING THE BIOTA.
THUS IS MY ROLE ALSO PRESERVED.


HAVE CON-FUSED ME.
BUT YOU, AND THOSE INSIDE YOU,

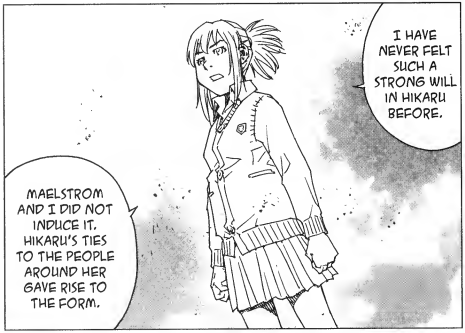
...

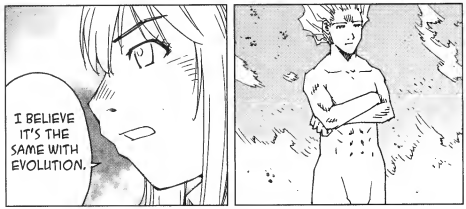
IF I COULD SAVE MY AUNT I SHOULD BE ABLE TO SAVE EVERY-ONE.
SO, PLEASE ...


YOU 3
ARE VERY INTER-ESTING.

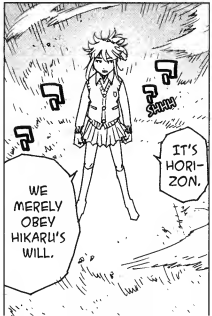
DESCENDING AT THE ONSET OF THIS PLANET'S MACRO-EVOLUTION...

ALL HIKARU WANTS
IS TO "SAVE CHIKA AND SAYA."


I HAVE NEVER FELT SUCH A STRONG WILL IN HIKARU BEFORE.
MAELSTROM AND I DID NOT INDUCE IT. HIKARU'S TIES TO THE PEOPLE AROUND HER GAVE RISE TO THE FORM.

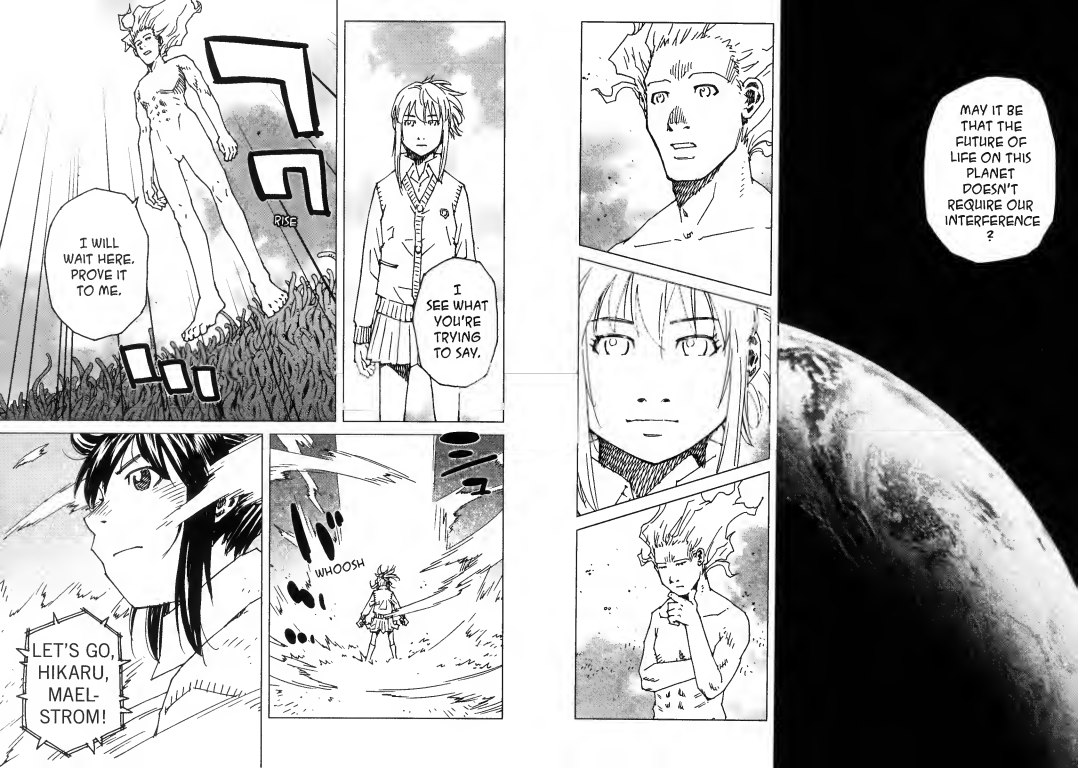

I BELIEVE IT'S THE SAME WITH EVOLUTION.

WHILE YOU'VE ACCEPTED YOUR OWN CHANGE, YOUR RENEWAL,
YOU WOULD PREVENT OTHER LIFE FROM FULFILLING THEIR EVOLUTION.


WE MERELY OBEY HIKARU'S WILL.
SHUH
IT'S HORI-ZON.

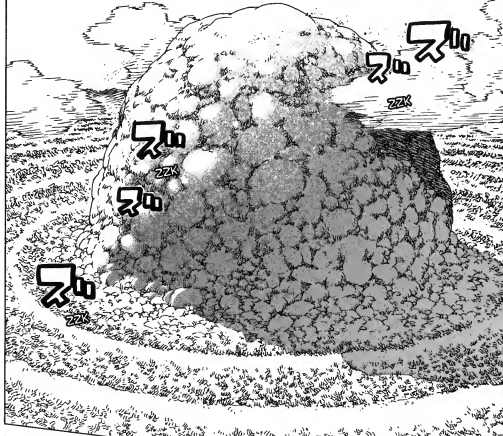
FLASH

HIKARU.
LET ME SPEAK.


RISE
I WILL WAIT HERE. PROVE IT TO ME.
I SEE WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY.
WHOOSH
LET'S GO, HIKARU, MAEL-STROM!
MAY IT BE THAT THE FUTURE OF LIFE ON THIS PLANET DOESN'T REQUIRE OUR INTERFERENCE ?

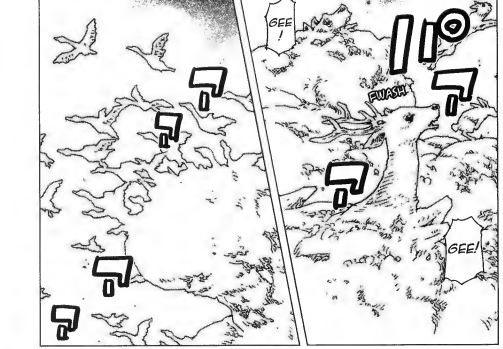
UP!
ZZK
!!
ZZK
ZZK

ZLAK


ZZK
ZZK
ZZK
ZZK

ZZK
IT'S ALSO ABSORBED ORGANISMS THAT DIDN'T ADMIT ANY SUBSPECIES ...
CHIKA MUST BE THE ONE KEEPING THEM IN ONE PIECE.
ZZK

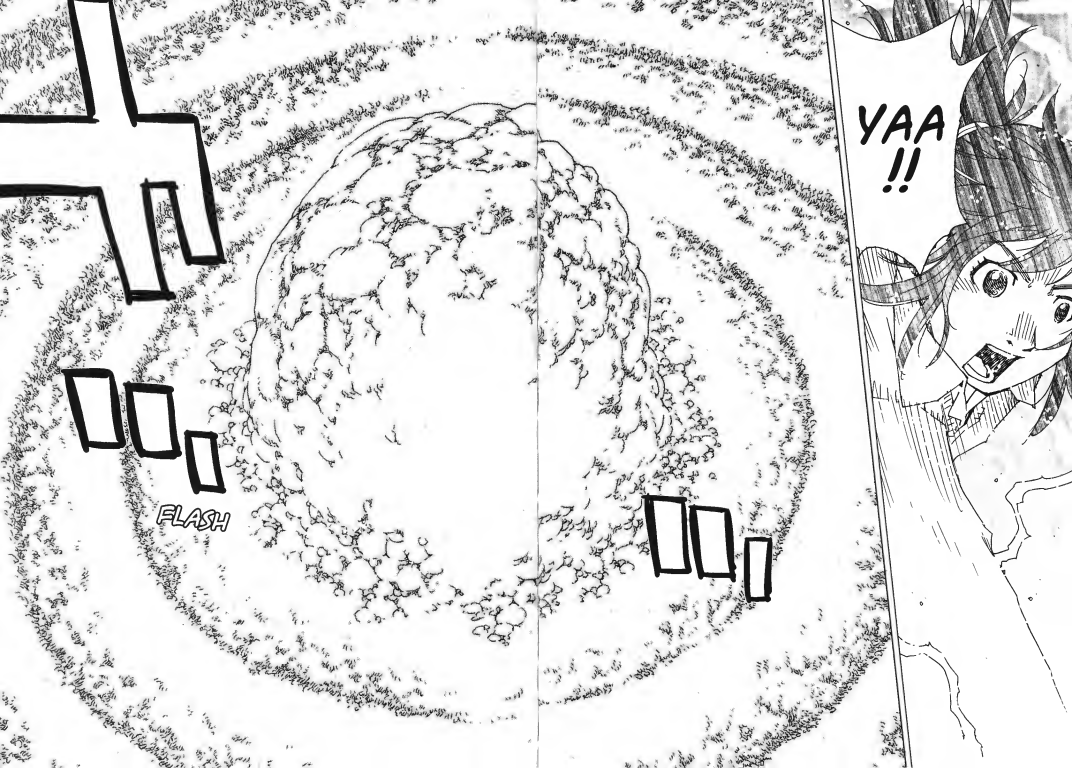
"LET'S GO," HE SAYS.
BUT THIS THING IS HUGE.


GEE!
FWASH
GEE!

ZUP

SLAM
WHAM

ZZAP

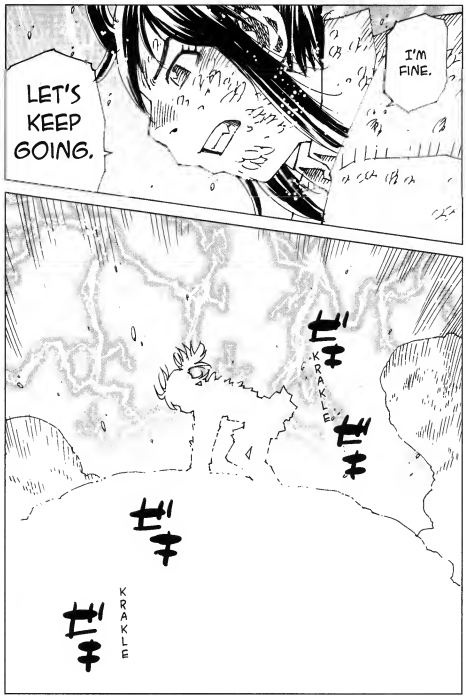

YAA
!!
FLASH

KRAK
KRIK
KRAKLE
ZZRT
ZZRT
ZZRT
HM?

ARE YOU OKAY ?!
HIKARU, YOUR BODY...
ZZRT
ZZRT
ZZRT

FWASH

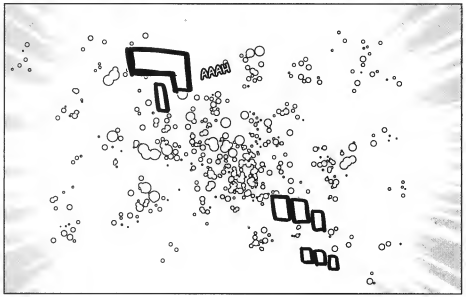
A FLOOD OF SUB-SPECIES!
FLOOD
CAN HIKARU ABSORB ALL OF THIS?!
GWAK!
SLIP


I'M FINE.
LET'S KEEP GOING.
KRAKLE
KRAKLE

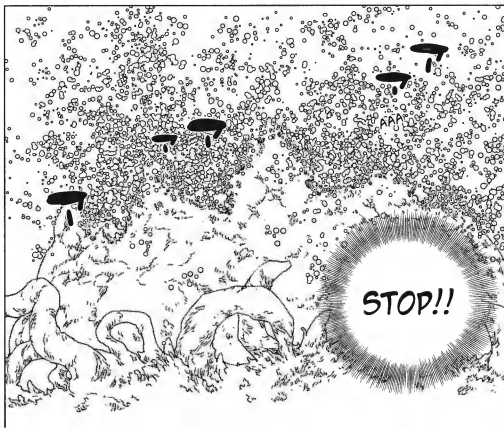
WHOOO
WHA...
WHAT'S THAT?!
HIKARU...

22. Acceptance

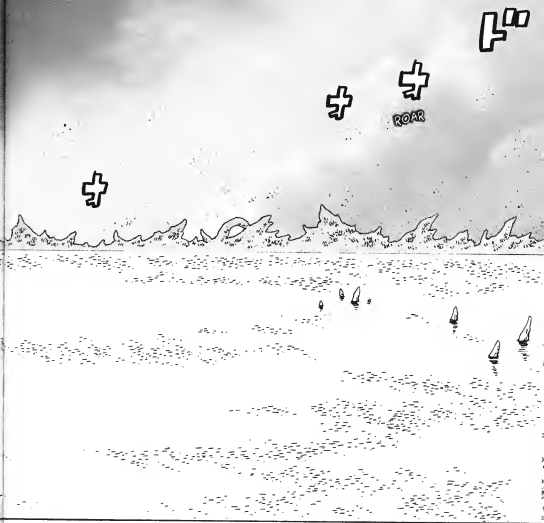
P-
PLEASE
STO—

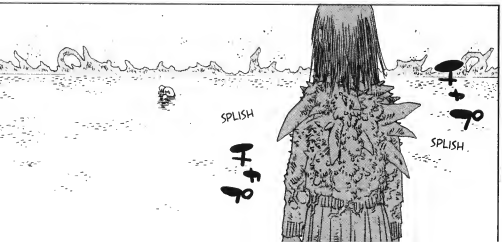

AAAH

BLAST

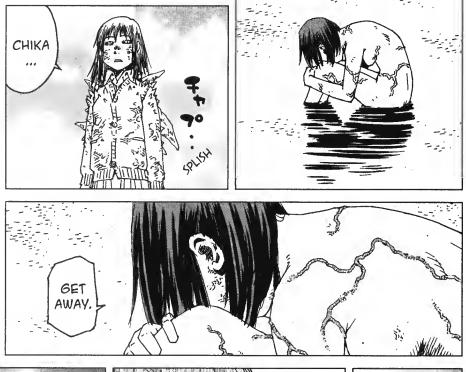

STOP!!

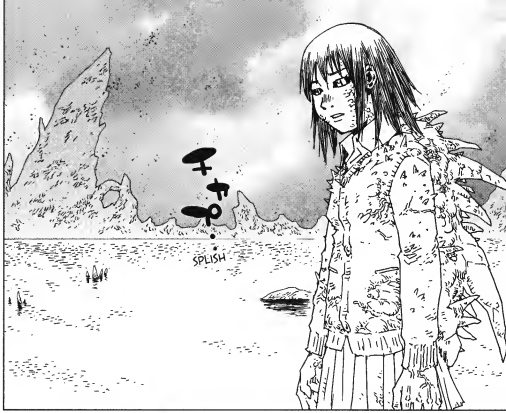
ZZHAA


ROAR


SPLISH
SPLISH

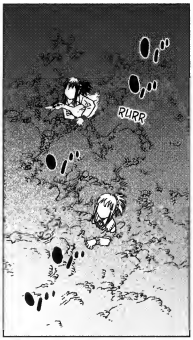
SPLISH


CHIKA
...
チャプ・
SPLISH
GET AWAY.
...
I SAID GET AWAY!!
CHIKA, I...


チャプ
SPLISH

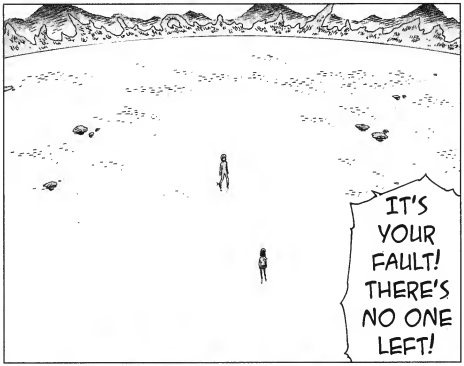
...

MUST HAVE EXISTED INSIDE OF THAT MASS.
THE WORLD AS CHIKA WANTED IT

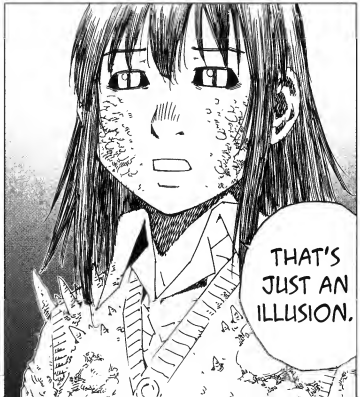

RURR

HUHH.
GAA!
THAT'S...
GAA!

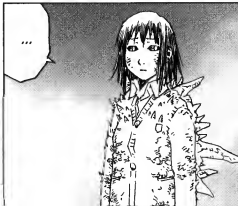
SPLOSH
IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT.
SPLISH


IT'S YOUR FAULT! THERE'S NO ONE LEFT!

...

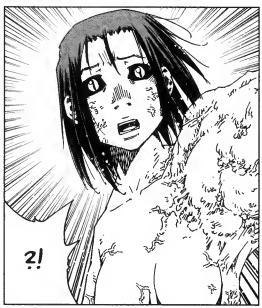

THAT'S JUST AN ILLUSION.

TELLING ME THAT WE'RE FRIENDS !!
THEY WERE ALL


...

SPLORT

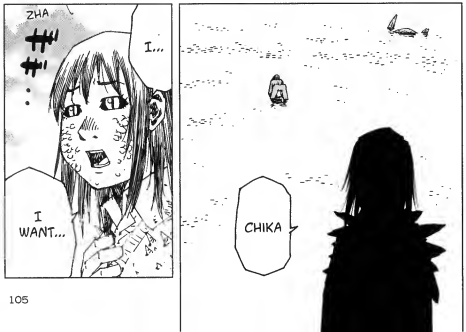
CHIKA...
CUT IT OUT.


?!

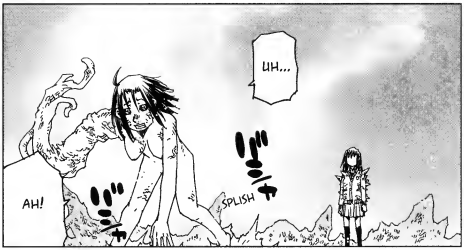
SH- SHUT UP!!
DON'T LOOK AT ME THAT WAY!!
SHOOOO

SHOO

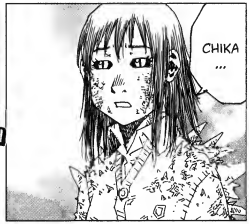
I DON'T WANT TO BE ALONE AGAIN!!
DRIP
DRIP
NO...


ZHA
I...
I WANT...
CHIKA

ZUK
UNH...
WHUM

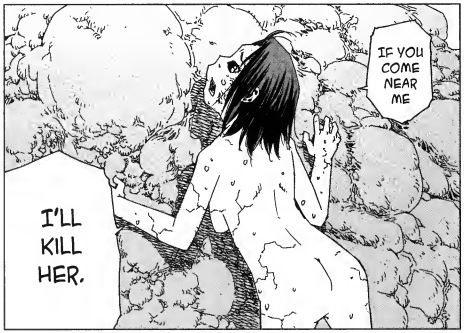

UH...
AH!
SPLISH

NO...
NO!
SPLISH

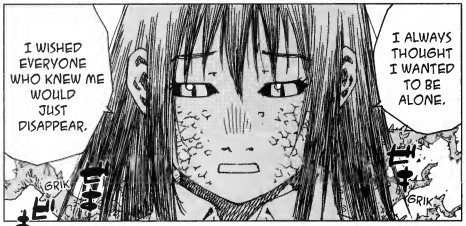

CHIKA
...

ZHAA
ZHAA

SAVA...


IF YOU COME NEAR ME
I'LL KILL HER.

ZHAA
ZHAA
ZHAA
ZHAA
ZHAA


I WISHED EVERYONE WHO KNEW ME WOULD JUST DISAPPEAR.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT I WANTED TO BE ALONE.
GRIK
GRIK

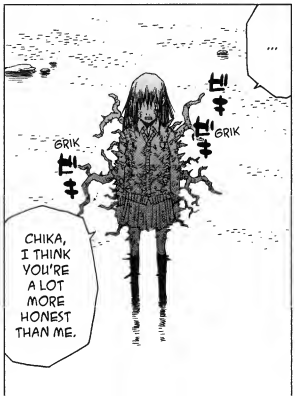
BUT I WAS WRONG.

CHIKA, I GET IT NOW.
SAYA SAID TO ME, "NO MATTER WHAT,
I'LL ALWAYS BECOME YOUR FRIEND." I WAS SO HAPPY. IT WAS A FIRST FOR ME.

IF I SEVER IT AT ITS BASE...
HIKARU, LET ME HANDLE THIS!

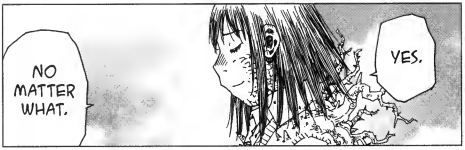
GRIK
GRIK
...!

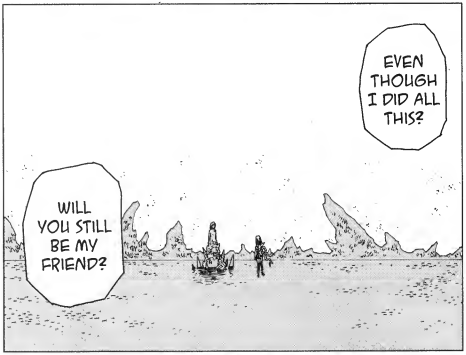
YOU COULD HURT SAYA.
WAIT!

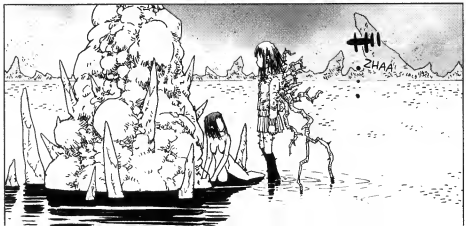

...
GRIK
GRIK
CHIKA, I THINK YOU'RE A LOT MORE HONEST THAN ME.

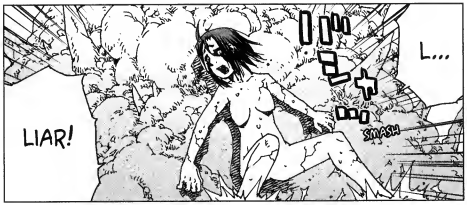
...
IT'S UP TO HIKARU NOW.

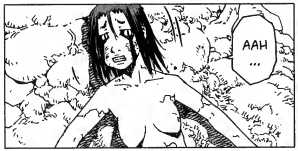
WILL YOU BE MY FRIEND?
I'VE BEEN WANTING TO ASK...

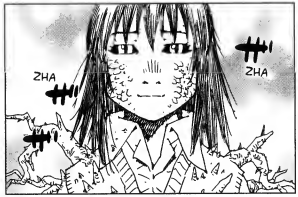

YES.
NO MATTER WHAT.


EVEN THOUGH I DID ALL THIS?
WILL YOU STILL BE MY FRIEND?


ZHAA


L...
LIAR!
SMASH


AAH ...

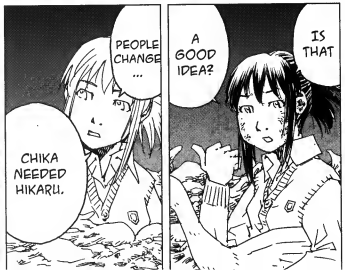

ZHA
ZHA

WILL YOU REALLY? NO MATTER WHAT?
...

ZHA
I'M NOT LYING.

SOB
SOB
WEEP

ZZZZZ


PEOPLE CHANGE ...
CHIKA NEEDED HIKARU.
A GOOD IDEA?
IS THAT

YES!
WE'LL ALWAYS BE FRIENDS!

SOB
SOB

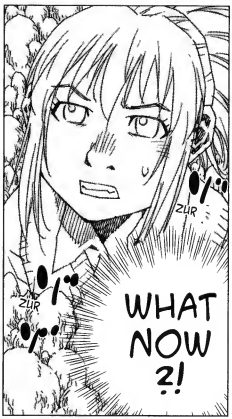
AAH!
URR
NGG
SPLASH
SPLUSH
DAMN IT!!
WHAT'S GOING ON?
ZZK
CRAP!
HIKARU'S ALREADY ABSORBED SO MUCH, CHIKA PUT HER OVER CAPACITY!
GRAK
GRAK

ZZK
WHAT NOW?!
ZLIK
H...
HI-KARU?!
BADUMP

N-
NO...
IF YOU... DO THAT...
KLAP
HIKARU WILL NO LONGER BE HUMAN !!
UHUHUHUH
URG!
I CAN'T CONTROL THE BODY!
I SEE. THEN DO AS YOU WISH.
...
WHOOO

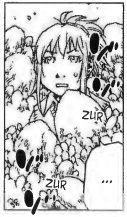
ACK !!
UHISH
WOULD YOU LIKE MY HELP?
ZZK
IF I CHANGE YOUR SIZE, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CONTAIN IT ALL.
YOU'VE EXCEEDED YOUR CAPACITY.
UHOOO

OHH!
GRIK
ARGH!
GRIK


ZUR
ZUR
WHAT NOW?!

WHAT SHALL WE DO?
ZUR
ZUR
HIKARU WON'T LAST LIKE THIS!

HEY !!


ZUR
ZUR
...

HEY! WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO?!
ZUR
ZUR
ZUR
THE SUBSPECIES ARE ABOUT TO OVER-WHELM HER!

...
ZUR
ZUR
ONLY ONE CHOICE.

WE HAVE TO DRAW OUT ALL THE SUBSPECIES.

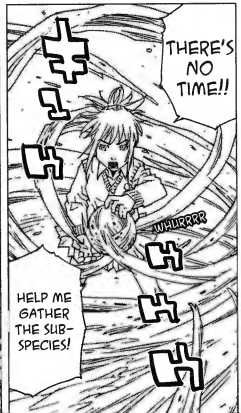
HIKARU!!
SPLASH
H...
SPLASH
DRAW OUT?
ZUR
ZUR
YOU MEAN WE HAVE TO LEAVE HER BODY, TOO?
YES!
ZUR
ZUR
ZUR
BUT I HAVE AN IDEA!!
BUT WE'RE SYMBI-ONTS!
I THOUGHT WE WERE IN A MUTUALLY DEPENDENT RELATION-SHIP?

Finale: Separation of Light
ZHA
ZHA
ZHA
AAAH!

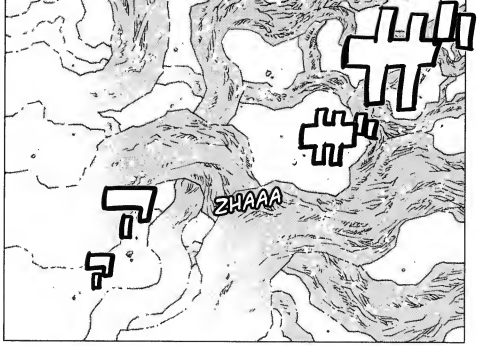
FLASH

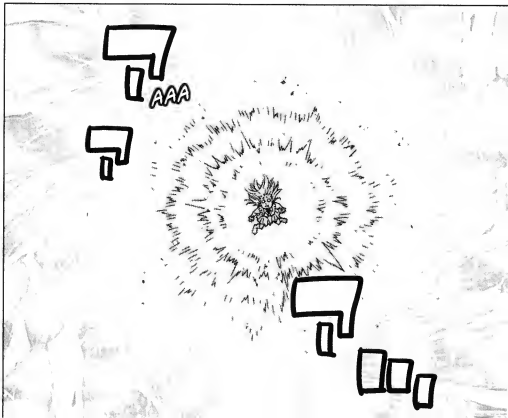
AAH!
ARGH!

WHAT ARE YOU UP TO ?!
ZUR
ZUR
ZUR


THERE'S NO TIME!!
WHURRRR
HELP ME GATHER THE SUB-SPECIES!

WHOR
WHOR
WHOR


ZHAAA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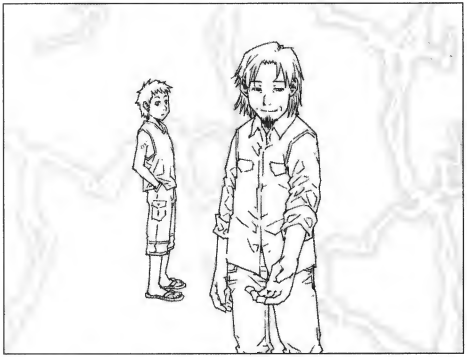
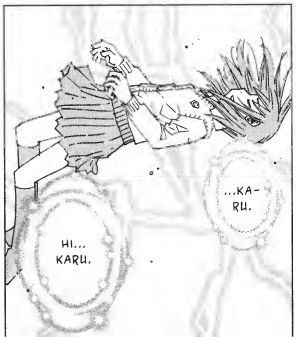
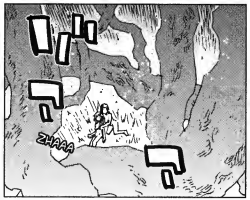


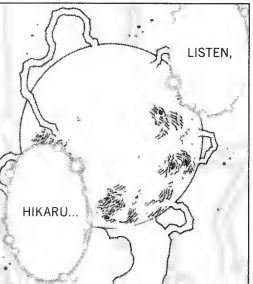
DAD?
MASA-YA?

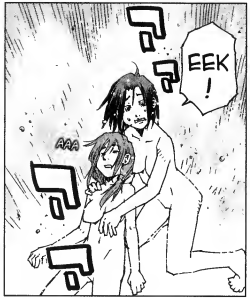

HI... KARU.
...KA-RU.

WHAT AM I...
WHERE AM I?

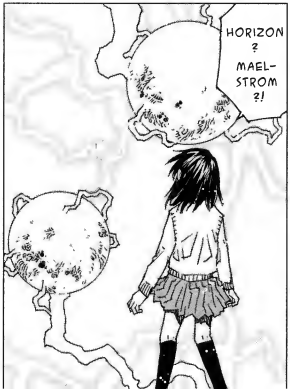
CHIKA! SAYA! THEY'RE BACK!
PHEW... THEY'RE OKAY!

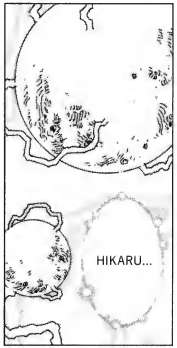

ZHAAA

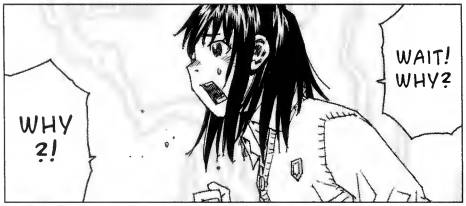

LISTEN,
HIKARU...

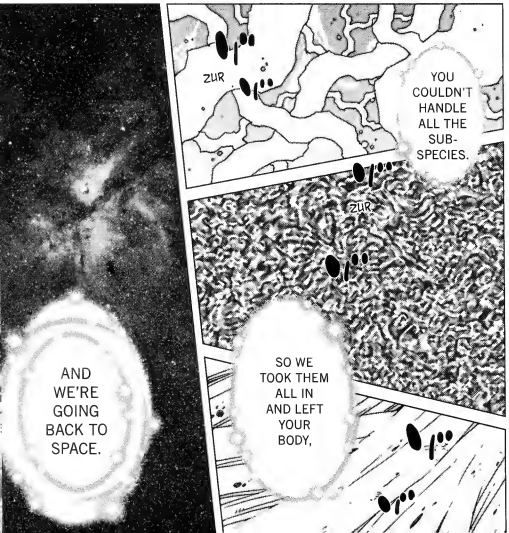

EEK!
AAA

!!


HORIZON ? MAEL-STROM ?!


HIKARU...


WAIT! WHY?
WHY ?!


ZUR
YOU COULDN'T HANDLE ALL THE SUB-SPECIES.
ZUR
SO WE TOOK THEM ALL IN AND LEFT YOUR BODY,
AND WE'RE GOING BACK TO SPACE.

MAELSTROM AND I ARE LEAVING THIS PLANET.

GOOD-BYE,
HIKARU.

I'M GRATE-FUL TO YOU.
DON'T BE SAD, HIKARU.
I THOUGHT OF OUR SYMBIOSIS AS MERELY NECESSARY.
WHEN WE MET

NO OTHER CHOICE.
TIME WAS LIMITED, AND WE HAD
THERE MUST BE SOMETHING ELSE WE CAN DO!
NO!!

THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY TO SAVE YOU.
IT'S TOO SOON!
DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE!

THANK YOU, HIKARU.

BUT AS YOU CHANGED, MAELSTROM AND I WERE AFFECTED: WE CHANGED, TOO.
IT WAS ENTIRELY UNEXPECTED. RIGHT, MAELSTROM?
TSK, I GUESS.
ERR DE ERR

I MET NONE OTHER THAN YOU, A ONE-IN-7 BILLION CHANCE ...
IT NEVER WOULD'VE HAPPENED OTHER-WISE.

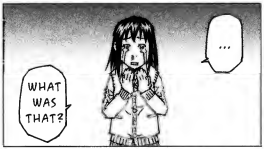
IT'LL COMMUNICATE WITH ITS HOST EVENTUALLY, LIKE US.
HIKARU! HIKARU!
BUT A SUB-SPECIES ...
DON'T WORRY.
OUR RE-SEARCH HAS FOUND
THAT THEY CAN GROW AND LEARN.

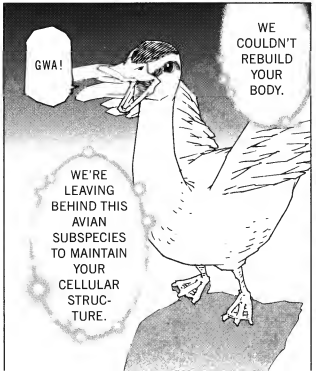
THE CHAOS ON THIS PLANET WILL SETTLE AS THE SUBSPECIES GROW AND EVOLVE.
MANY MORE MAY APPEAR, BUT THEY'LL BE SIGNS OF A NEW EVOLUTION YOU'VE OBTAINED—PROBABLY.

GWAK! GWAK!
HIKARU, DON'T CRY!

SNIFF
クンクン

SOB
SOB
SOB
WEEP

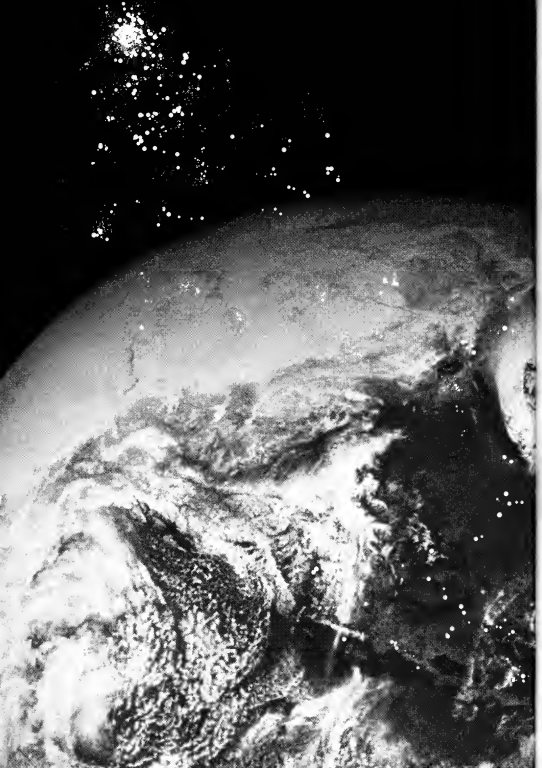

...
WHAT WAS THAT?


GWA!
WE COULDN'T REBUILD YOUR BODY.
WE'RE LEAVING BEHIND THIS AVIAN SUBSPECIES TO MAINTAIN YOUR CELLULAR STRUC-TURE.

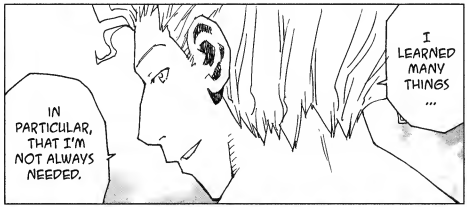
UH, SORRY.
I FORGOT TO TELL YOU.

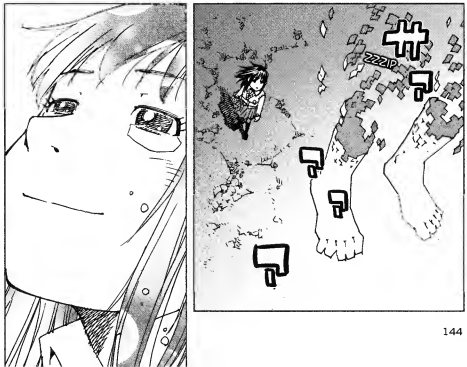
FLASH
WHAMP
ACK!
WHOOOOO
EVOLVING TO BE SLIGHTLY LESS LONELY ...
YEAH.
OKAY, WE'RE OFF.
BYE, HIKARU.
HEY, WE'RE READY!
BYE.
...

FLASH
WHAT A RESTLESS PAIR.
WELL, WELL.
ZHA
ZHA



I'LL BE GOING TOO.


I LEARNED MANY THINGS ...
IN PARTICULAR, THAT I'M NOT ALWAYS NEEDED.


ZZZIP

...
SHUT UP...

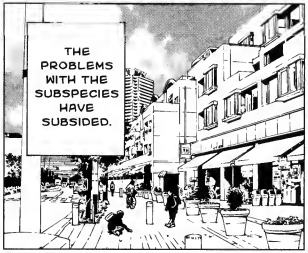
BRR
BRR

I SAID
IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!

DON'T CALL ME "BIRDIE." I WANT A COOLER NAME.
I KNOW, BIRDIE.
HAVE WE EVOLVED TO BE JUST A LITTLE LESS LONELY? I DUNNO.
YOU'RE A BIRD. THUS, BIRDIE.

GOTTA MEET UP FOR KARA-OKE!
GWA!

HIKARU, HEY! HURRY UP!


THE PROBLEMS WITH THE SUBSPECIES HAVE SUBSIDED.

NGG, COLD!

HORIZON WAS RIGHT.

THE STARS ARE OUT ALREADY.

WHAT?
WHAT WAS THAT?
I WONDER IF WE'LL MEET AGAIN.

HA HA HA!
SPOT ON!

HIKARU!

HA HA HA!
AND THEN...

I WANNA SING WITH HIKARU!
WAIT FOR YOUR TURN!!

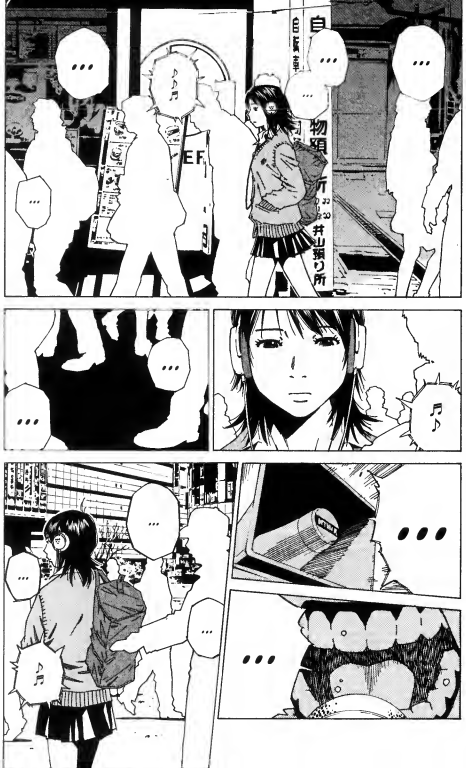
BLINK

7 BILLION NEEDLES

Fin

HIKIKOMORI ヒキコモリ ヘッドホンガール headphone girl

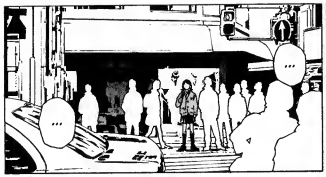
The following short was created before *7 Billion Needles* was serialized. It features a character who is Hikaru's prototype. "Hikikomori" means *shut-in*: someone who never leaves his or her room, for years in the worst cases.


自転車
物頃井山張り所

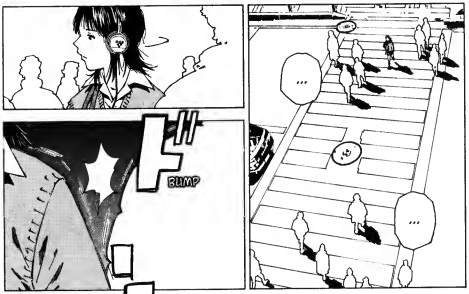
HIKIKOMORI
ヒキコモリ
headphone girl
ヘッドホンガール

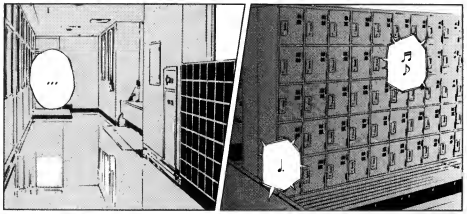
♪
...
...
...

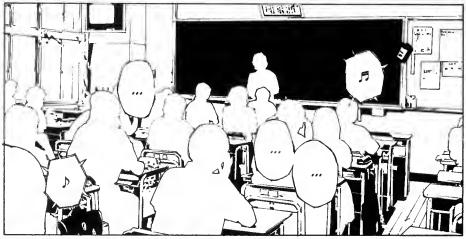
YOU'RE EVEN MORE "SHUT-IN" THAN THEY SAY.


...
...
...

BLINK


♪
BUMP
...
...

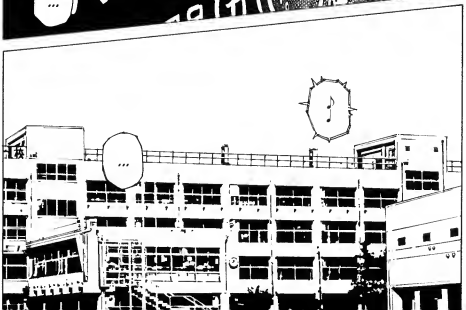

...
♪


...
♪
...
...

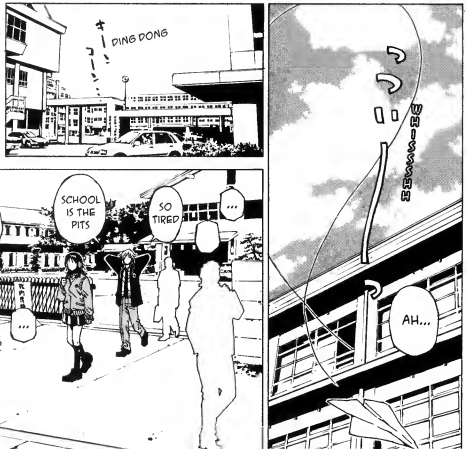
WHEN WILL IT END?
THIS CLASS SUCKS.
♪
♫

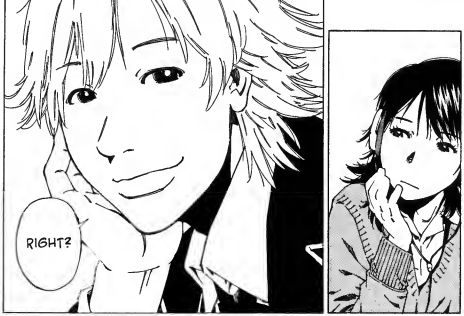
HASHIMOTO
♪

...

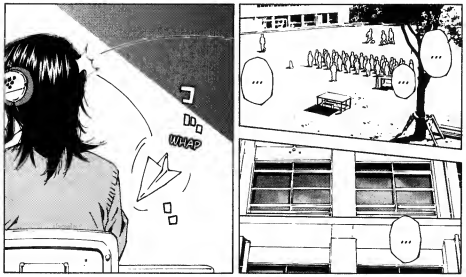

♪
...

GRIN
RUSTLE
I love you.
Marry me.


DING DONG
SCHOOL IS THE PITS
SO TIRED
...
...
...
SWEAT
AH...

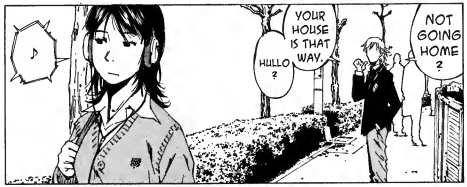

RIGHT?

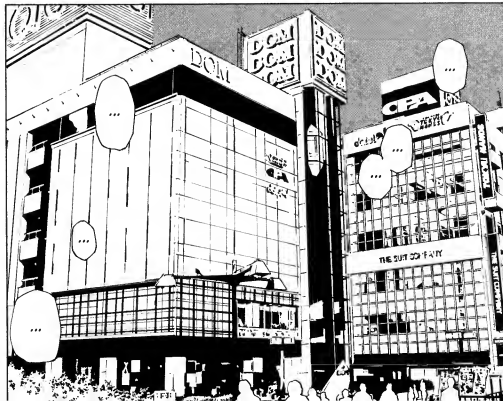
SURE, GO AHEAD, IGNORE ME.
HUH.
TURN


UNHP
...
...
...
...

...
...
...
ガラ…
RATTLE
CASHIER
CASH
...
...
A SKULL?
YOU LIKE THAT SORT OF THING?
GLANCE
チラ…

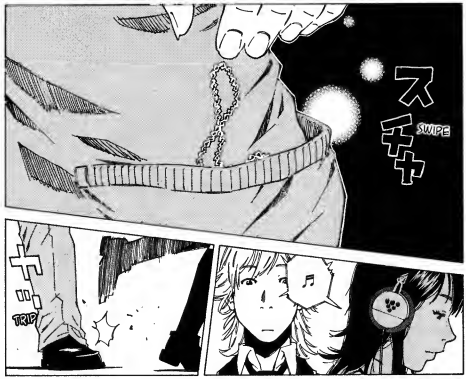
HUH?
NOT A WORD YET.
...
♪♪


♪
HULLO?
YOUR HOUSE IS THAT WAY.
NOT GOING HOME?


DOM
DOM
DOM
DOM
CPA
...
...
...
...
...
THE SUIT COMPANY

WHIRR
RUN AWAY!
DASH

THAT WAS CLOSE.
PANT
PANT
PANT
PANT
PANT
YOU COULDN'T STAY A SHUT-IN IF THEY CAUGHT YOU.


スチャ
SWIPE
TRIP

カチャッ
KLATTER
SLAM

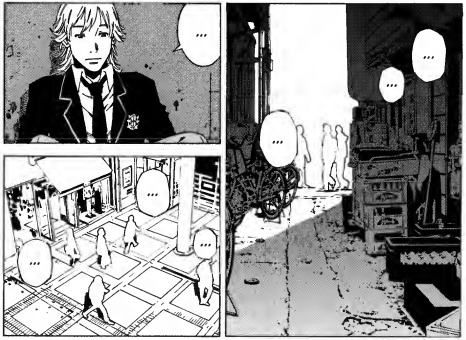
I...
REALLY DON'T KNOW IF I SHOULD SAY THIS.

BUT IT'S FOR YOUR BENEFIT,
SO I'LL SPIT IT OUT.

DUN
DUN
DUN
HM?
FREEZE
I CAN SEE YOUR UNDER-WEAR.

REALLY CLUMSY. BAD TIME TO TRIP.
GLENCH!

OH!
YOUR FIRST EXPRESSION!
THUMP
THUMP


...
...
...
...
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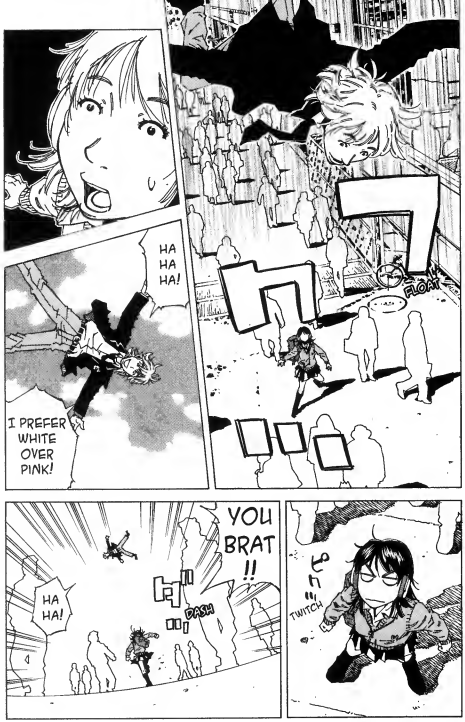
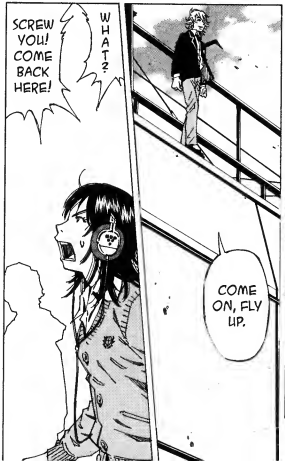

FLOAT
HA HA HA!
I PREFER WHITE OVER PINK!
YOU BRAT !!
HA HA!
DASH
TWITCH

2F
RUSH
Exciting
THUP
HEY!
STOP !!
DAM-MIT!!
GRAB
OOPS! FAST!
YOUR FIRST WORDS!
OH!

FROWN
YOU CAN FLY.
DAMN!
OR I'LL RUN.
HURRY!

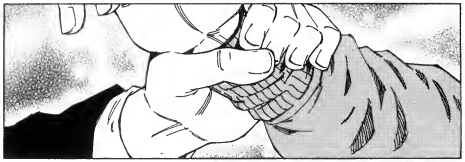
RAAA-AAR!
HUP

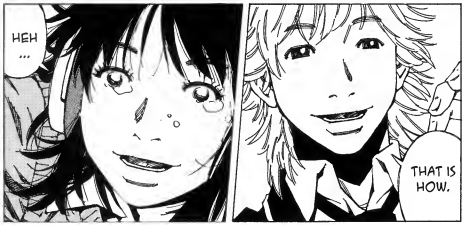
HERE! UP HERE!
ST.


SCREW YOU! COME BACK HERE!
WHAT?
COME ON, FLY UP.

WHERE ARE YOU?!

HERE.



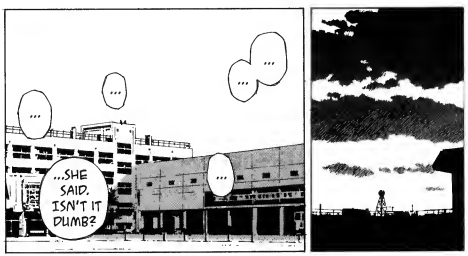

HEH ...
THAT IS HOW.

NNA ?!
WHOA !
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP

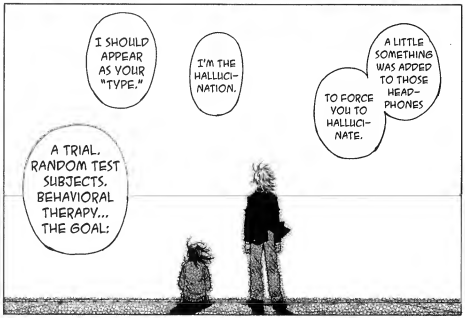
WHIRL

I DON'T REALLY GIVE A DAMN
BUT ...
'CAUSE ...
WE JUST DO THE SAME THING EVERY DAY, THERE'S NOTHING I WANNA DO, SO WHY LIVE?
THEY'RE ALL KIDS
GROWN-UPS ARE LIARS
THEY ALL BITCH ABOUT STUPID STUFF
DON'T THEY THINK ABOUT ANYTHING OTHER THAN BOYS?
I LOVED GRADE SCHOOL
ME, I WOULDN'T TELL EVEN IF THEY ASKED
MY MOM IS SO ANNOYING. A TOTAL NAG.
WHY STUDY?
IT'S NOT MY...
IT'S NOT MY FAULT.
TRY TALKING TO SOMEONE SO YOU'LL...
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT.
YOU KEPT ALL THAT INSIDE.

HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA!


...
...
...
...
...
...SHE SAID. ISN'T IT DUMB?

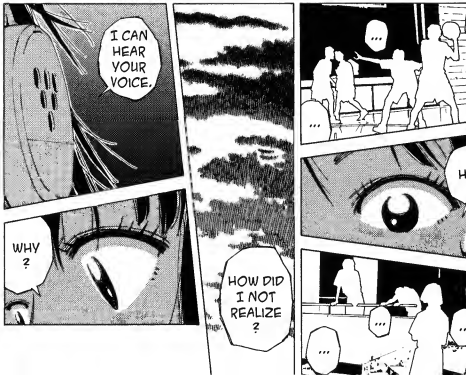
FINAL WHAT ?
F...
THE FINAL PHASE.
NOW, THEN.
RISE.

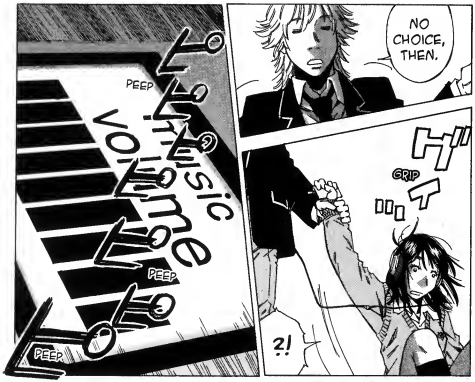

I SHOULD APPEAR AS YOUR "TYPE."
I'M THE HALLUCI-NATION.
A LITTLE SOMETHING WAS ADDED TO THOSE HEAD-PHONES
TO FORCE YOU TO HALLUCI-NATE.
A TRIAL. RANDOM TEST SUBJECTS. BEHAVIORAL THERAPY... THE GOAL:

ARE YOU PISSED ?
TO CURE KIDS LIKE YOU.

TAKE OFF THOSE HEAD-PHONES.

♪ ...
♫


I CAN HEAR YOUR VOICE.
WHY ?
HOW DID I NOT REALIZE ?
...
H...

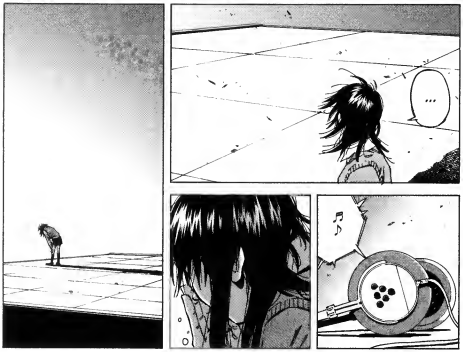

PEEP
PEEP
PEEP
music volume
NO CHOICE, THEN.
GRIP
?!

WURR
WURR
KLAK
WHIP
AGH!

I DON'T EVEN GET IT.
N-NO
YOU'RE FINE NOW.
WHAT HAPPENS IF I TAKE THEM OFF?
I WON'T DO IT.
WILL YOU DISAP-PEAR?
NO!
YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT.

LET'S GO.
WHERE TO?
OH, CRAP!
WHAT?!
THROW IT!
5 MORE LAPS!
COME ON!
YOUR WAY!
AH...

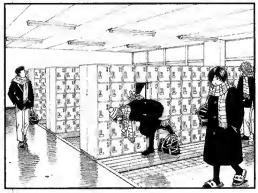
I'M HOME.
GO TAKE A BATH!
HURRY
TOO EARLY FOR BEER.
CURRY FOR DINNER!
MOM!
AGAIN?
GASP
WEIRD


...

HIKIKOMORI ヒキコモリ ヘッドホンガール
headphone girl

The End

Rough Designs



Early Images

HIKARU'S DAY